

**SKETCH-TO-STRETCH:  
AN ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT OF READING  
COMPREHENSION WITH RELUCTANT WRITERS**

By

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*Figure 1: Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO  
(M.N., May 31, 2013)*

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## **Abstract**

Not all students have success with written reader-responses to texts and this is particularly true of reluctant writers. However, this lack of success does not mean such students fail to comprehend a text, its main idea, or the author's intentions, only that they experience difficulty with expressing their understanding using traditional means. This thesis examines the use of sketch-to-stretch, a visual text strategy that invites students to respond to text with art, as an alternative form of assessment with reluctant writers. Undertaking a qualitative case study approach to teacher research, I endeavoured to gain insight into my practice and further my professional knowledge on how to best meet the needs of the reluctant writers in my class.

Conducted during the 2012-2013 school year, the focus of this case study was a female reluctant writer in my third grade class at Queenstown Public School (The Peel District School Board). Data, comprised of artifacts the student produced as part of her everyday school experience, were collected and thematically analyzed according to presentation and audience; ideas and meaning making (text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world) and voice. Further data consisted of two normative attitude surveys, an exit survey and a personal reflective journal kept of my practice throughout the study. Results suggest that sketch-to-stretch is a viable alternative to assessing reluctant writers on text comprehension. When scored according to a common rubric, the student participant achieved markedly higher levels in demonstrating her understanding of a text using sketch-to-stretch than with traditional written reader-responses. The sketch-to-stretch strategy, as a form of assessment, offers students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and understanding in a creative, anxiety-free forum. It is one more way

teachers can meet the needs of their diverse students while still ensuring accountability of learning.

## Acknowledgements

*“Hi Ms. McBride! Lexi forgot to give this letter [to me]. I am sorry for the late [reply]. Good luck with your research.”* (S.V., personal communication, June 21, 2013).

The fact that I finished my thesis means I am indebted to quite a few people. I am grateful for the support of my thesis advisor, Dr. Andrew Manning and the members of the examining board: Drs. Jerome Harste (without whom there would be no sketch-to-stretch) and Vivian Vasquez; my fellow post-graduate classmates (MEd) and our small group of MA students (Adam Sanderson, Betty & Neil McClung); past and present school administrators who played a part in this thesis and the road to get here: Tara Steffens, Claudine Scuccato, and Simone Gravesande; my school’s tireless head-secretary, Patti Lilly, and English language learner teacher, Joanne Mah; my wonderful group of third grade students and their incredibly supportive parents; and my own family: Patricia Hutchison, Doug McBryde, and Eilidh McBryde.

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Each person, in his or her own way, has helped to open my eyes, my mind, and my horizons.

Thank you.

## Chapter One: Struggles in the Classroom

### 1.1 Introduction

*“Hi Everyone...just wanted to wish you the best of luck with the assessment starting today. I know the stress and anxiety that this causes, but ultimately the conditions are right for the children to do the best they can. You have made sure of that!”* (Gravesande, personal communication, June 28, 2010).



**Figure 1.1.1: Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO**  
(S.A., May 31, 2013)



**Figure 1.1.2: Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO**  
(D.K., May 31, 2013)

*Okay, boys and girls, please open your package.*

*Ensure your package includes: a Language 1 booklet, a Language 2 booklet, a Mathematics booklet, a Student Questionnaire.*

*Ensure that the final 12 digits on your package ID match the final 12 digits on each booklet...*

*Place everything except the first booklet (Language 1) to be completed under your chair. Be sure to attempt all questions. If you leave a question blank, it will be scored 0. Begin the first section in the booklet Language 1. Work to the first stop sign...*

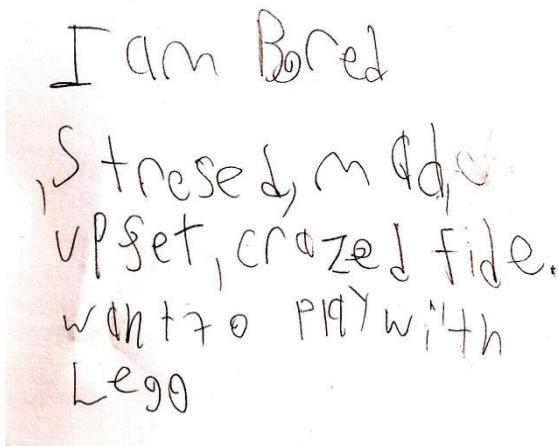
That was me not that long ago reading from the “Assessment Day Instructions for Teachers” script in my 2013 *Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Teacher’s Administration Guide*. As a third grade teacher working in an Ontario school,

the EQAO Language and Mathematics Test is an unavoidable experience. Standing at the front of my classroom, I carefully read the test's instructions and attempted to answer any last minute questions and concerns. Looking at the faces of the 20 students in front of me, I could not help but observe their mixed expressions of anticipation and anxiety, excitement and dread. The tension in the air was palpable. We had been preparing for this inevitable day since January, and now the time had arrived to write the provincial standardized test on language and mathematics. Each year, students across the province write this test in grade three. A similar test is again written in grades six and nine. Each spring, my school hosts an information evening for parents of third grade students to answer questions about the test, clear up misconceptions, and alleviate any fears. And, while we endeavor to make the experience as inviting and stress-free as possible, no child looks forward to writing a six hour test, even one which is staggered in two hour blocks over three days.

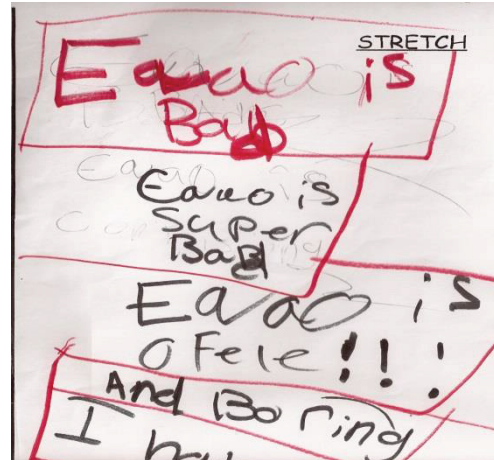
For reluctant and/or struggling writers, writing the EQAO test is an especially harrowing experience. These students are faced with the insurmountable task of using traditional pencil and paper means to answer questions on reading comprehension and mathematics. Some of my exceptional students receive the support of assistive technology, such as Premier text-to-audio software, to read the passages for them or to type their answers. Other students choose to have a teacher scribe their answers verbatim, as provided for in their Individual Education Plans (IEP). However, for the students in my class who possess a strong dislike for writing, but have no (in)formally identified exceptionalities, there are no such accommodations. Instead, they are left to their own devices. Unfortunately, these devices can appear as avoidance techniques (e.g.,

frequent bathroom breaks, or drinks from the class water fountain). As a result, it is not surprising that during the three-day testing period in May, the number of students that typically sign-out to use the washroom almost tripled (rising from an average of five students to 13; the maximum being 16 students on the second day of testing) (journal notes for May 21-30, 2013). Most of these students struggle with literacy-based tasks, particularly in the area of writing.

On our third and final day of testing, I found myself remarking in my reflective journal on the comments students made about writing the EQAO test. While a few students told their friends that they thought the test booklets were easy, most of the comments I overheard were very negative. Many students commented that they found the reading passages overly long, uninteresting, and difficult to decode and understand. They also felt the test required too much writing. Some students remarked that the time spent at home and at school preparing for the test was tiring and overwhelming. They also felt that the EQAO test dominated too much of the school day and detracted from other subjects, such as science, social studies, and health which had been pushed to the background for review and taking the test (journal notes for May 31, 2013).



**Figure 1.1.3: Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO.2**  
(D.K., May 31, 2013)



**Figure 1.1.4: Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO**  
(C.S., May 31, 2013)

## 1.2 What is EQAO?

“What is the purpose of EQAO?” is a question I get asked a lot. When I sit down with the parents of my students for the first time in the fall to discuss their child’s academic progress report, I am typically bombarded with the same three questions. First: “How is my child doing?” Second: “When is EQAO this year?” Third: “If my child fails the EQAO test, will she also fail the third grade?” Regardless of the plethora of information available to parents on EQAO, the controversial test continues to be shrouded in an air of mystery and suspicion. The EQAO test is a province-wide, norm-referenced test administered to all third grade students in Ontario. The test is designed to assess a child’s proficiency and achievement in language (reading and writing) and mathematics in relation to the Ontario provincial standard of achievement (what is commonly referred to as a Level 3). According to “The Power of Ontario’s Provincial Testing Program,” the EQAO test was created in 1996 to act as an independent gauge of children’s learning and achievement, with the secondary goal of providing a higher

quality of education and accountability in the public education system (for more information see [www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com)). The test is typically administered in the last week of May or the first week of June. Some leeway is given to school administrators to select the dates on which the test is administered. Administrators are also able to decide how the test is divided and overseen in their school during the testing period (e.g., for one hour over six days, for two hours over three days, etc.).

To assess achievement in language, students are instructed to complete two booklets (Language 1 Booklet: Sections A & B and Language 2 Booklet: Sections C & D). Booklets consist of a series of different text passages (e.g., short narrative, procedural recount, graphic text, or poem) that students first read and then answer vocabulary and comprehension questions on. Questions take the form of multiple choice, short-answers, and long-answers. Students are typically given five lines on which to answer short-answer questions (e.g., *Explain why the speaker said...*). For creative writing pieces, students are provided a blank area in which to brainstorm/mind map and record their ideas on the topic, and then a selection of nine lines on which to write their paragraph (stories are allotted 18 lines) (see Figures 1.3.2 and 1.3.3). Many students forego the brainstorming process in order to save time, as they know this section of the test is not scored. Throughout the test, students are repeatedly reminded that any portion of their answer that falls outside the parameters of the designated answer area will not be scored.

EQAO booklets are scored according to a set of standardized rubrics and exemplars generated by the EQAO organization. Students earn a score for each answer, ranging from a B (blank response), I (illegible, irrelevant response), Level 10 (Level 1),

Level 20 (Level 2), Level 30 (Level 3, the provincial standard of achievement), and Level 40 (Level 4, above the provincial standard of achievement). According to the *Ontario Growing Success* document: “Level 3 represents the provincial standard of achievement. The student demonstrates the specified knowledge and skills with considerable effectiveness. Parents of students achieving at Level 3 can be confident that their children will be prepared to work at subsequent grades/courses.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 18). Level 30 (3) is what each child strives to achieve on the EQAO test. Examples of past student assessment booklets, scoring guides, and answer keys are archived on the EQAO website. For more information on student performance achievement levels, please see the *Ontario Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools (First Edition, Covering Grades 1-12)* document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

### ***1.3 Why EQAO Does Not Work: The Trouble with Short-Answer and Long-Answer Questions***

While no teacher likes to think of herself as “teaching to the test,” the EQAO test is an unavoidable reality, and the process of preparing students for success begins months in advance. At my school, preparation begins with teaching students different strategies for effectively answering comprehension question. One popular formula is APE (Answer the question, Prove from the text, Extend or give an opinion, or make a connection, then write a closing sentence). Another frequently used formula is QAR (Question-Answer-Relationship), which teaches students to distinguish between different types and levels of questions and the answers they require, such as: search and locate, right there, author and me, me on my own. While a handful of my students demonstrate a solid grasp of writing

quality answers to short-answer and long-answer comprehension questions, the majority of students struggle to move beyond the literal. To put it simply, their answers are short, shallow, and insufficient. Following the suggestions of Fountas and Pinnell, I worked daily with my students in guided writing. We first reviewed the typical structure of various writing formats and the corresponding scoring guidelines. Students then did quick readings followed by answering text questions in writing. Afterward, students often shared their answers and reflected and evaluated their responses. The goal was to help my students demonstrate their knowledge and build their test-taking confidence in a way that was similar to the EQAO test, but more supportive (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 509). Later in the year, students were asked to perform similar activities, but this time the setting was more reminiscent of the EQAO test-taking setting.

In the months leading up to the EQAO test, students in my class were asked to read eight different texts and write answers to their respective follow-up questions. The texts and comprehension questions were either directly taken from past EQAO assessment booklets, or were of a similar nature. Topics ranged from responses to poems, procedural accounts, persuasive accounts, and short narratives. As with the EQAO test, students were given only a pencil to write with; a limited amount of time in which to work (40 minutes); and five lines to write on. In total, I collected 154 written responses that were assessed as part of my daily teaching practice. These responses were scored using both the rubrics and exemplars provided by EQAO, or ones devised by myself that followed the EQAO scoring guide (see Table 5.1.2 for rubric). It should be mentioned that student scores did steadily improve with the aid of direct teaching and repeated practice (from 0% of the class achieving Level 3 or Level 4 on Writing Prompt

1, to 42% of the class achieving Level 3 or Level 4 on Writing Prompt 8). However, after dividing the total number of levels achieved: 293, by the number of individually written responses: 154, I determined that the average level of achievement from my class was 1.9, just below a Level 2 (see Table 1.3.1 for details). According to the *Growing Success* document, “A Level 2 represents achievement that approaches the provincial standard. The student demonstrates the specified knowledge and skills with some effectiveness. Students performing at this level need to work on identified learning gaps to ensure future success.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 18).

**Table 1.3.1: Levelled Written Responses (April 2013-May, 2013)  
Break Down of Student Achievement on Written Reader-Responses**

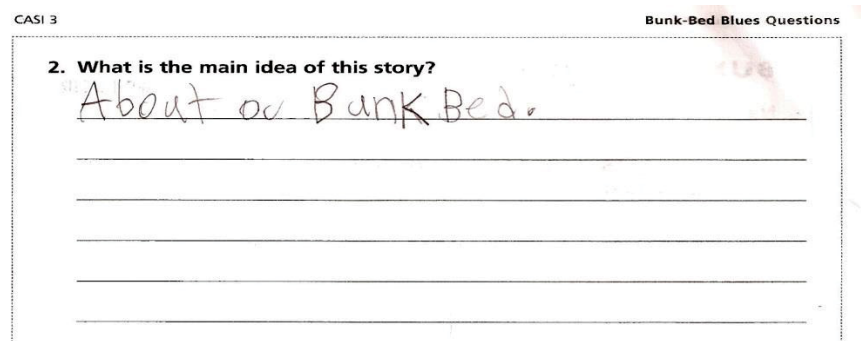
	Writing Prompt 1	Writing Prompt 2	Writing Prompt 3	Writing Prompt 4	Writing Prompt 5	Writing Prompt 6	Writing Prompt 7	Writing Prompt 8
Level B/I	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Level 1	13	10	8	8	7	2	1	1
Level 2	6	8	9	9	8	12	11	10
Level 3	0	0	3	2	4	4	5	5
Level 4	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	3
Participants	20	19	20	19	20	19	18	19

Why were my students underperforming on these types of reader-response questions? I knew the answer did not lie completely with comprehension. While nine of my students received remedial support with reading, the remaining 11 were reading at, or above grade level. In fact, two of my highest level readers were students achieving Levels 1 or 2 on their writing tasks. Did their results have something to do with the format and stance I was asking my students to use? Were the questions too uninspiring? Was I inadvertently stifling my students’ creativity by restricting the materials they could

use, the amount of space they could write in, the amount of time they had to work with, and the strategies they had to apply? Were the questions, by their very design, hindering my students from demonstrating their understanding and setting them up to fail? These were just some of the questions I found myself recording and reflecting upon in my teaching journal. A perfect example of this was a response one of my best readers, Serena, gave to a question on the grade three CASI (Comprehension Strategies Interests) test in the fall. As with the EQAO test, students were asked to independently read an unfamiliar text (*Bunk-Bed Blues* by Jacqueline Adams) and answer a series of multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions on the content. The CASI test purports to measure a student's comprehension in the following categories:

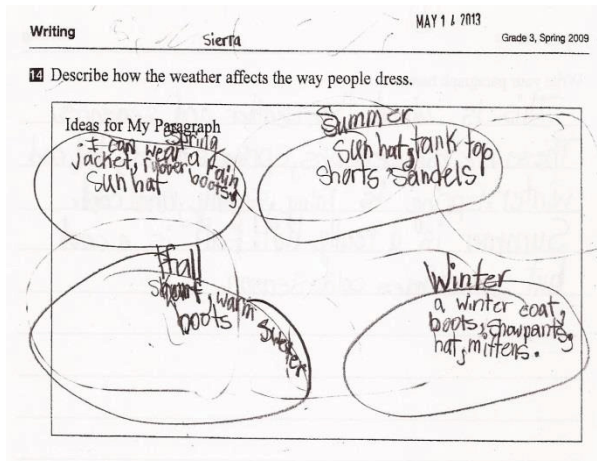
knowledge/understanding; inferring; creative/critical thinking; conventions of written text; ability to explain, support, and apply what has been read; and ability make connections among texts, personal experiences, and life situations (Doctorow, McGowan, & Reid, 2009, pp. vi-vii). Given double the allotted time of her peers (for a total of 120 minutes) Serena, along with her classmates, was asked to complete five short-answer questions about the text *Bunk-Bed Blues*; answer four multiple-choice questions; and complete two graphic organizers. Serena completed the multiple-choice questions, made an attempt at completing one of the graphic organizers (a chart on story characteristics) and attempted to answer two short-answer questions. The rest of her test was left blank. Below is her response to Question 2. According to the CASI Scoring Guide, Question 2 falls under the category of "Thinking" (Ibid.). As part of their response, students are expected to "infer meaning using stated and implied ideas from the text as evidence, and use creative/critical thinking processes to interpret and analyze information from the text"

(Ibid.). Serena achieved a Level 1 on both attempted written responses, as she answered an aspect of the questions; however, both answers were very short and literal in nature. She clearly failed to accurately demonstrate her understanding of the text. It should be noted that the text was present in front of Serena at all times and she had the option of referring to it to refresh her memory on content details or to find supporting evidence for her answer.

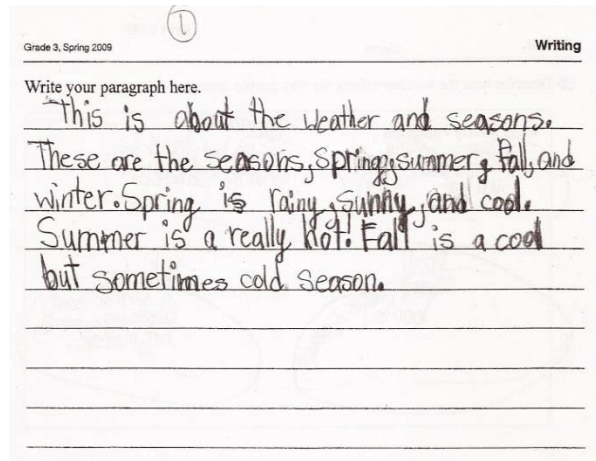


**Figure 1.3.1: CASI response to Bunk-Bed Blues (Serena, Sept. 19, 2013)**

As mentioned above, Serena wrote the CASI test in September, 2012. Curious if any progress had been made in the depth and breadth of Serena’s answers by the end of the school year, I examined her response to a similar task conducted in May, 2013. Figures 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 are answers that Serena wrote in response to an EQAO practice question taken from the “EQAO Writing Booklet, Spring 2009.” In part 1, Figure 1.3.2, Serena is instructed to use the space provided to record her ideas on how to dress appropriately for different types of weather. In Figure 1.3.3, she is asked to write her answer in standard paragraph format.



**Figure 1.3.2 (Part 1): EQAO Practice Response (Serena, May 14, 2013)**



**Figure 1.3.3 (Part 2): EQAO Practice Response (Serena, May 14, 2013)**

Serena, an artistic child, who enjoys drawing and making crafts, took advantage of the blank space to create a series of word bubbles to record her ideas and demonstrate her understanding of the question. As seen in Figure 1.3.2, Serena decided to categorize the weather according to the four seasons. Relying on her personal experiences for support, she recorded examples of clothing a person would wear during each season (e.g., in the summer, people wear a sun hat, tank top, shorts, and sandals) in their respective bubbles. Although not represented in proper paragraph format, Serena’s ideas clearly demonstrate an understanding of the topic. Not only has she provided several examples to support her thinking, she has taken great pains to carefully label each category. Aware of the strict rules EQAO has regarding working inside the provided space, she has also reworked her mind map to ensure the diagram fits within the test’s parameters. Unfortunately for Serena, this section of the EQAO test is not scored. If this was a real testing situation, Serena would receive no recognition for her effort.

Figure 1.3.3 shows Serena's attempt at answering the question in a written paragraph, as requested. Her answer falls short. In fact, with the exception of identifying the four seasons (which is not necessary for answering the question) she fails to address the question. Not once does she refer to clothing or the affect weather can have on how people dress. The examples she recorded in her mind map in Figure 1.3.2 are not mentioned. As a result, Serena's paragraph is scored as a Level 1 according to the EQAO rubric for short writing topic development and exemplars: "Response is not developed; ideas and information are limited and unclear. Organization is random with no links between ideas. Response has a limited relationship to the assigned task." (EQAO: Student Booklet, Language 1, Spring 2009). If Serena had elected to rewrite her mind map as a traditional paragraph, she would have achieved a Level 2, if not higher, on Question 14: "Response is minimally developed with few ideas and little information. Organization is minimal with weak links between ideas. Response is partly related to the assigned task." (Ibid.). Unfortunately, in this instance Serena's understanding of the text is assessed in terms of a mold she does not fit, while the format she excels at goes unrecognized by EQAO's scoring system.

Today's classrooms are overcrowded, resources are scarce, and time is always of the essence. It is not surprising then that our need for a quick-fix solution when it comes to assessing text comprehension can overpower our better judgment as professionals. As a result, we look to formulaic writing prompts and in the process, do our students a disservice. After all, if our students do not follow a cookie cutter design, it is only common sense that a cookie cutter approach to demonstrating comprehension will not work for everyone. Five-lined written responses, while quick and easy to mark, will not

always accurately reflect how a student understands a concept or topic. After all, according to Routman, when students are asked to answer teacher-originated short-answer questions, they tend to either search for the needed information and copy it from the text, or produce responses light on thought and reflection (Routman, 2005, p. 125). There needs to be an alternative. While the EQAO test is more than likely here to stay, we do not have to spend our time teaching to it. Through alternative forms of expression and assessment, students can make meaning and demonstrate their understanding. They can do so on their terms and to the best of their abilities while receiving the recognition they deserve along the way. The aim of my teacher research is to examine the possibilities for making meaning and assessing reading comprehension using the sketch-to-stretch strategy with reluctant writers.

#### ***1.4 Research Question Rationale***

From my preliminary literature review, there appears to be a lack of information on how to effectively use sketch-to-stretch as an alternative form of assessment for reading comprehension in students who are reluctant writers. The goal of my teacher research is twofold. I wish to provide new insights into using sketch-to-stretch as an alternative form of assessment for students who struggle with demonstrating their learning through traditional pencil and paper written responses. In the course of my research, I also wish to increase my understanding of the different learning processes that affect the academic performance of the reluctant writers in my class.

## **Chapter Two: Sketch-to-Stretch**

### **2.1 *Introduction***

In Chapter Two, I discuss sketch-to-stretch, a reading comprehension strategy I was first introduced to during year one of my MA program. As a visual text strategy that falls under the umbrella of trans-mediation, sketch-to-stretch is an invitation that encourages students to make meaning across different sign systems (e.g., from the written word to artistic interpretation). This relationship, along with the many incarnations of sketch-to-stretch, is further explored in section three. Sections four and five provide the reader with an overview of traditional and alternative assessments, while section six describes the reluctant writer in the classroom. Section seven outlines different uses for sketch-to-stretch, and its many manifestations outside of the classroom.

### **2.2 *The Role of Visual Texts in the Classroom***

According to Moline, literacy is more than just communication through words and writing. The texts and signs we encounter on a daily basis can often include an overwhelming barrage of visual elements, such as diagrams, graphs, maps, and tables (1995, p. 1). If we want to provide our students with a complete literacy program, we need to include opportunities for students to express their beliefs, feelings and ideas through drawings as well as writing (Ibid.). As Moline points out, “One of the great advantages of visual texts is that the information they provide is accessible to all readers, [regardless of age or proficiency] ... Similarly, students who are judged to be ‘poor writers’ (when asked to write exclusively in words) are sometimes discovered to be

excellent communicators if they are allowed the option to write the same information in a visual form, for example, as a diagram, graph, or map.” (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, visual texts are not always given the credit they deserve in the classroom. Instead, they are seen as simplistic stepping stones to worthier tasks. Often devalued and regulated to the sidelines, visual texts can be perceived by teachers as a jump-start to the real work: a preliminary exercise, such as a graphic organizer, to be completed before undertaking a writing assignment. Visual texts may also be thought of as add-ons or after-thoughts, nice extras to our literacy programs (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013, p. 128) (i.e., illustrations or decorations to a piece of writing) or worse, a busy task to occupy early finishers (e.g., “If you finish your work early, you may doodle or colour.”) (Moline, 1995, p. 15). Teachers overlook the important fact that visual texts can engage and motivate those students judged to struggle with reading and writing, while giving support and confidence to those students whose strengths lie in visual perception and communication (Ibid., p. 3). According to Leland, Lewison, and Harste, “The arts are integral to the processes of expanding communication and supporting oral and written language learning.” (2013, p. 127). In this regard, visual texts can help “develop thinking skills such as selecting and combining strategies to solve problems and to initiate new solutions to writing tasks.” (Moline, 1995, p. 4). They combine verbal and visual literacies to make an integrated text and literacy experience (Ibid.).

### **2.3 *Sketch-to-Stretch***

Sketch-to-stretch is an activity that involves trans-mediation and abstract thinking (Burke & Harste, 1988). As defined by Semali, trans-mediation is “The process of taking

understandings from one sign system and moving them into another in order to make meaning or ‘representing’ meaning across sign systems.” (Semali L. M., 2002, p. 160).

This process of moving between and among language and art can generate new ideas and in-depth understanding (Leland et al, 2013, p. 127). Moreover, multimodal strategies, such as sketch-to-stretch, provide the means for students to create new identities and have their voices heard (Ibid., p. 128).

Sketch-to-stretch is generally thought of as a post-reading response strategy that encourages students to make personal connections to a text (see Cairney, Leland et al, Whitin). Topics can include visually representing the most important part in the text; sketching an interesting issue from the text; or sketching the feelings evoked by an event in the text. In this respect, sketch-to-stretch is more than just drawing a picture of a favourite scene (Leland et al, 2013, p. 202). Metaphorical by nature, it allows readers to share with others their responses to a text through drawing, sketching or printing. It offers students an opportunity to generate more insights about a text by exploring a different and exciting medium, one that involves sketching lines, colours, shapes, symbols and pictures (Whitin, 2002, p. 444). For students who normally do not experience success through the written word, sketch-to-stretch offers a form of expression that does not include the constraints and frustrations that can be associated with writing. By taking what is learned in one system (language) and “recasting” it in another system (drawing), the door is open to greater student-selected choice and ownership (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 455). In this respect, the student is responsible for how he interprets the text and the choices he makes to visually represent his understanding with the sketch (e.g., pictures, diagrams, labels, notes, quotes, so on).

After reading a selection of text or hearing it read aloud, students think about the text and then decide how to visually recompose the information they have understood (Ibid.). Teachers must take care that the sketch does not become an exact depiction of the text. Sketch-to-stretch is not meant to be reduced to a retelling exercise; instead, students are encouraged to find a new way of representing the meaning they have derived from the text (Ibid.). The focus on the sketch can range from a subjective, personal response (“Draw how the text makes you feel.”), to a more comprehensive response (“Draw the author’s message.”, “Visually represent what you have learned.”, or “Sketch the main idea.”).

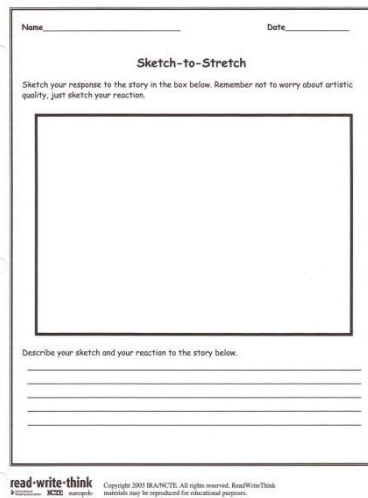
Sketch-to-stretch can take many forms. A quick search on the Internet turns up a slew of sketch-to-stretch incarnations and templates. Ranging from a simple blank canvas for drawing, to a page divided into eight separate boxes (for examples, see Figures 2.3.1-2.3.3), teachers can adapt the sketch-to-stretch strategy to fit almost any invitation. A popular layout, and one that I used with my students, consists of a double-entry page with one side labelled “Sketch” and the other side labelled “Stretch.” Using this format, students are encouraged to sketch what they are visualizing in the “Sketch” box while they read or listen to a text being read aloud (Gehling, 2005). Afterward, students are given time to reflect on their drawings and to write an explanatory description in the adjacent “Stretch” box (Ibid.). However, it should be noted that writing is not a necessary component for an effective sketch.



**Figure 2.3.1: Sketch-to-Stretch Template (McBride, 2012)**



**Figure 2.3.2: Sketch-to-Stretch Template (Gehling, 2005)**



**Figure 2.3.3: Sketch-to-Stretch Template (Dennis-Shaw, 2003)**

In their book, *Teaching Children’s Literature: It’s Critical*, authors Leland et al, suggest that “students keep an 8 ½ x 11” bound sketchbook (2013, p. 138). Children can use their sketchbooks to make written, as well as visual responses to books. Again, students may use the double-entry system, in which the sketchbook is divided into different sections for strategy lessons, or personal and group responses to literature

(Ibid.). Teachers may also wish to take advantage of strategies such as “Quotable Quotes” and “Post Cards of the Mind.” To learn more about these strategies see Leland et al (2013). In the case of the latter, students are provided 3x5 inch index cards to record thoughts or explanatory notes about their sketches. These index cards are then taped to adjoining pages in the sketchbook (Ibid.). After the sketches are completed, teachers may invite students to share their work with others (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 455). Such talks can be done in partners (e.g., as a ‘think-pair-share’), in small groups, or in a whole class setting. By explaining their sketches and listening to their classmates’ comments, students can expand upon their own interpretation, understanding and schema in an act of co-constructed learning (Ibid.). When done properly, sketch-to-stretch can scaffold the learning of reluctant and struggling readers and writers. It can also provide insight into the learning process and valuable assessment data for teachers.

While sketch-to-stretch is primarily used as a post-reading activity in language arts classes, it would be a disservice to limit it to this. Sketch-to-stretch is a versatile strategy that easily acts as an effective tool for summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing concepts in mathematics, science, and social studies. For instance, during the school year, students in my class were invited to sketch-to-stretch what they learned about soil and plants; how a fire truck used energy; and the differences between urban and rural communities. Sketch-to-stretch can also be used as pre-reading activity to activate a student’s prior knowledge on a topic or as a debriefing strategy to review what has been learned so far.

## **2.4 *Assessing Sketch-to-Stretches***

A search of the Internet reveals only a handful of attempts by teachers to assess sketch-to-stretch exercises. Most of these attempts involve a teacher-created rubric. A quick glance at these rubrics immediately shows why there are so few. Simply put, assessing a student's sketch-to-stretch is problematic. The rubrics located on the Internet tend to employ a scoring system from 0-3 or 4 points, with "0" representing no points and "3" or "4" representing full points, or good/excellent work. According to these rubrics, students are graded on a virtual smorgasbord of abilities. Criteria ranges from the student's ability to attentively listen to the text with interest; to completing a text-relevant sketch using colour and creativity (the purpose of which is to either demonstrate an understanding of the text's main idea or retell events); to using proper spelling and conventions of print; to completing a corresponding writing assignment; to participating in a follow-up group discussion (for examples, see Appendices A & B). The criteria used in these rubrics are so glaringly flawed that it is difficult to know where to start. In Chapter Three, I outline the process I used for assessing the student-created sketch-to-stretches in my class.

## **2.5 *Who Are Our Reluctant Writers?***

Each year, I encounter students in my class who experience difficulty with writing. Labelled as "reluctant," "struggling," or "at-risk," these students require direct teaching as well as extra support and encouragement to write (for the purposes of this paper, the term "reluctant writer" will be subsequently used). Inevitably, they find themselves in academic situations where their success is hampered simply because it

requires putting a pencil to paper. This does not mean the students lack intelligence or creativity, only that the means by which these qualities are being assessed fall short of recognizing their individual experiences, knowledge, and insights. While writing, be it printed or word processed, will always play a role in their lives, it is not the only way for students to communicate their comprehension.

A careful review of literature for the popular term “reluctant writer” turns up an assortment of wide-ranging characteristics; but, no clear definition. There are many reasons why a student may be a reluctant writer, such as: a fear of failing; a lack of experience and skill; a lack of focus; boredom or a lack of engagement with the topic and task. According to Berninger et al, several processes can mediate a student’s written response to a text (2009, p. 30). These include: motor processes (graphomotor execution); lexical and sub-lexical processes (expressive and receptive orthographic coding, morphology); syntactic processes; attention, executive function, and working memory processes; automatic and controlled processing and fluency; and cognitive flow (2009, pp.31-24). For more information on the multiple processes affecting writing instruction and assessment, see Berninger et al. For a more concise definition, however, I looked to Paul Gardener’s report “The Reluctant Writer in the Primary Classroom” (2011).

A reluctant writer is one who experiences one or more barriers to the writing process on a regular basis. Barriers may be exhibited during the process of writing as well as or instead of, the start of the process. In addition, a reluctant writer may be defined as one who’s writing is habitually superficial, either because ideas are not expanded upon or because the writing is executed in haste. (p. 36)

For a student who experiences issues with any of the above processes, writing can be an overwhelming and anxiety-ridden undertaking. It goes without saying that a child

is unlikely to perform her best under such conditions. Yet, knowing this, teachers continually turn to traditional written responses and worksheets to assess reading comprehension.

## **2.6 *Sketchnotes and The Doodle Revolution: The Other Benefits of Sketch-to-Stretch***

While the intention of this thesis is to investigate sketch-to-stretch as a form of alternative assessment with reluctant writers, I would be remiss if I failed to mention some of its other benefits. Sketch-to-stretch is not only for students in the classroom. A similar strategy called “Sketchnotes,” or “Visual Note Taking,” is trending in boardroom brainstorming sessions, and at conferences and corporate functions (Lamm, 2010). Using a variety of building blocks, materials and structures, this strategy encourages people to utilize non-linear thought, visual hierarchies and mnemonics, as well as real-time processing and concentration, to make connections with that they are seeing or hearing (Ibid.). The end result is multisensory learning that leads to greater understanding, stronger memory retention, innovative ideas and opportunities for change in the workplace (Oste, 2012). In her talk, “Doodlers, Unite!” Sunni Brown discusses the important role doodling, or visual learning can play in improving a person’s comprehension and creative thinking (2011). According to Brown, doodling can be defined as the making of spontaneous marks to help yourself think (Ibid.). Studies show that people who doodle retain up to 29% more information than their non-doodling counterparts (Ibid.). Doodling improves creative problem-solving and deep information processing because it simultaneously engages all four modality systems: visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinesthetic, with the possibility of a fifth connection: an emotional

experience (Ibid.). For more information on responding to literature across multiple sign systems, see the writings of Short, Kauffman, and Khan (2000).

In 2009, Time Magazine published a brief article, “Study: Doodling Helps You Pay Attention,” on the cognitive psychology behind doodling. According to psychologist Jackie Andrade, “doodlers actually remember more than non-doodlers when asked to retain tediously delivered information, like, say, during a boring meeting or a lecture.” (Cloud, 2009). In a small, but rigorously controlled study of 40 participants, results showed that participants who drew (20 of the 40 participants) while listening to a two and a half minute audio recording, recalled 29% more information from the recording than their non-drawing counterparts (Ibid.). Andrade believes this result is because doodling is akin to daydreaming. Doodling, which requires less “executive brain function” (the higher cognitive process that involves planning and completing a task across multiple brain sites and pathways) (Chasnoff, 2011), uses just enough cortical networks to help a person recall what is going on without becoming distracted by conflicting thoughts, the latter of which tends to occur when you daydream (Cloud, 2009). To illustrate this point, Cloud remarks on how daydreaming about a vacation can lead to wandering thoughts on possible destinations, flight schedules, hotel packages, packing, and so on (Ibid.).

Dr. Chasnoff, a leading researcher on executive function disorders in children, believes that students with executive function disorders often have trouble with the ability to self-direct behavior; maintain and integrate multiple bits of information; manage goals; stay on task; problem solve in a cognitively fluent manner; and place information into memory in order to complete a later task (2011). As executive functioning disorders can

make it difficult for children to perform operations that require attention, concentration and mental control, it is not surprising that these children often get diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Ibid.). It also stands to reason that these children will have significant difficulties in school. For example, a child may know all his spelling words one day, but is unable to spell a single word the next day (Ibid.). Although children are often accused of having "selective memory," in reality, the problem is not related to selection, but to storage and retrieval (Ibid.). In other words, the student is having difficulty recording information, storing it for later use, and then recalling it. To remember the spelling words, the child needs special, often multisensory, cues (Ibid.). This is another area where sketch-to-stretch has the potential to be a powerful multimodal strategy for learning and demonstrating understanding.

## **2.7 *Alternative Assessment***

One of the current trends in assessment of reading and writing achievement is to use a combination of high-stakes proficiency testing, or, what Berninger, Garcia, and Abbot call "one point in time ... response[s] to relatively neutral prompts." (2009, p. 19). While these "one-shot" tests can provide important insight into a student's relative level of writing achievement in reference to age or grade peers (norm-referenced assessment) or to criteria for writing performance (criterion-referenced assessment), they often take place at the end of the year and do little to affect instruction, at least for the current school year (Ibid.). As a third grade teacher in Ontario, this is something I am very familiar with. As mentioned in Chapter One, as school draws to a close in May, my students are required to write the province's EQAO test, the large-scale, standards-based

test that purports to gauge overall student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics. Another tried and true assessment is the pencil and paper comprehension test, a mixture of close and open-ended questions that test a student's ability to recall, to reflect, and to make connections to a text. Teachers need to question whether these traditional forms of *assessment of learning* provide an accurate picture of their students' understanding and ability, particularly those students who struggle with writing (Gardner, February 2011). There will always be students in our classrooms who fail to fit the mold; students who have difficulty expressing their experiences, feelings and understanding within the confines of five lines on a sheet of paper. I decided to undertake teacher research to find an alternative method for assessing the reading comprehension of these reluctant writers; a method that was not defined by paper and pencil written reader-response. I have come to believe that sketch-to-stretch is one such method.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

I begin Chapter Three by situating myself in my teaching career, school and classroom, and addressing how I came to the decision to undertake teacher research with my third grade class. The third section is devoted to detailing the methodology I used in my thesis, while the fourth section provides a description of the particular approach I took: the qualitative case study. The fifth section explains the important role ethics played in the method I used, and my experiences with obtaining Research Ethics Clearance from Mount Saint Vincent University. The sixth section provides the reader with a brief overview of the different approaches I used to collect data during my case study (a topic that will be explored in greater detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six). Finally, the last section of this chapter introduces my approach to data analysis, which I will return to and discuss in greater detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

### ***3.2 Situating Myself in My Teaching Career, School and Classroom***

I am a 33 year old white female in my ninth year of teaching. I have taught at my current school, Queenstown Public School, since my graduation from the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario in 2004. I started as a short-term occasional teacher, and was hired on several months later to a long-term occasional post to cover the early maternity leave of a second grade teacher. The following year, I was offered a contract as a full-time, dual-age kindergarten teacher. I taught kindergarten from 2005 to 2011. In 2011, I was offered the position of third grade teacher at Queenstown Public School. This is my second year teaching grade three.

My school is located in a low socio-economic, working-class neighbourhood in Brampton, Ontario (population 525,000), where a high number of immigrant families live in rental accommodations (apartments and older two-story brick houses). Most of the houses in my school's neighbourhood accommodate a minimum of two families in what we commonly refer to as "upstairs/downstairs" rental units. Our families tend to be very transient, and many of our students have poor attendance records and/or have attended more than one school during their short elementary careers. Most of the students at Queenstown Public School are either first generation Canadian or new immigrants to the country. Our multicultural student body boasts 33 different spoken languages. The dominant ethnicity of the students at Queenstown Public School is South East Asian, representing approximately 79% to 80% of our ELL students (grades 1-5). Amongst our 55 staff members, we have one full-time English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, two full-time In-School Support Program (ISSP) teachers, and one colleague who teaches half-time ELL and half-time ISSP.

Queenstown Public School was built in 1976, and has undergone two structural additions to accommodate our once growing community. In 2006, we were zoned to take the children of a nearby new subdivision booming with young families enjoying their new "starter homes." Approximately half of our student population (350 students) is bused to school. However, over the last couple of years, the school's population has seen a marked decline in enrolment, as these children graduate and go onto the neighbourhood's middle school and their families stop having babies. At its height during its boom period, Queenstown Public School taught well over 800 students; our

current student enrollment stands at approximately 720 students, K-5. Our projected enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year is 686 students.

My third grade class consists of 20 students (11 girls and nine boys), ages eight to nine years old, with mixed backgrounds and diverse life experiences. Some of the countries my students and their families originate from include: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. My class is designated as an ISSP cluster, with nine of my students receiving some variation of withdrawal support from an ISSP teacher. For eight of these students, this support takes the form of 40 minutes of small group reading remediation, four days a week. Four of these students are on informal IEPs, and working to meet curriculum expectations in language arts and mathematics that have been modified to grade two expectations. One of their classmates is on an informal IEP for accommodations only (e.g., extra time to complete assignments, and use of a scribe or assistive technology for completing writing tasks). In my class, many of my students experience some level of difficulty with reading comprehension, and demonstrated reluctance toward, and difficulty with writing.

After observing many of my students struggling on a daily basis with reading comprehension, and seeing their growing dislike of traditional writing activities, I wanted to find a way to improve their understanding of different texts while also relieving some of the anxiety, frustration, and resentment they felt toward traditional written comprehension tasks. I felt that relief may lie with a text strategy that emphasized making connections and demonstrating comprehension, without relying on old-fashioned paper and pencil worksheets or short answer questions. Taking an inquiry stance, I decided to undertake teacher research to investigate how sketch-to-stretch could benefit

my reluctant writers (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 6). While this was my primary concern, it was not my only reason for taking on this year-long endeavour. My secondary goal was to gain first-hand knowledge about my classroom practices. My plan was to use the information and insight gleaned from the research process to inform, not only my future decisions about the content I teach, but the ways in which I plan on teaching it (e.g., how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of my diverse students).

### **3.3 Methodology: Teacher research**

Founded on the influential work of John Dewey, Lawrence Stenhouse, and Donald Shon, among others, (Check & Schutt, 2011, pp. 257-8) teacher research commonly involves classroom practitioners at any level, from preschool to tertiary, who are either individually or collaboratively involved in self-motivated and self-generated systematic and informed inquiry (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 9). The goal of such inquiry is to enhance their vocation as professional educators (Ibid.). Often this investigation and research involves their own classroom and students; however, it would be remiss to limit it to this (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 4). As Lankshear and Knobel point out:

Although the ultimate point of impact sought from teacher research is on what occurs *in* classrooms, it does not follow that this end is best served solely through direct empirical study *of* classrooms. Teachers may learn much of value for informing and guiding their current practice by investigating historical, anthropological, sociological or psychological studies and theoretical work conducted in other places and/or other times. These could be studies of policy, communities, social class, the work world, non-standard language varieties, and so on. (2004, p. 7)

Many teachers, including myself, undertake teacher research believing that the knowledge and insights gained from the experience will contribute to a change in professional practice and personal theory (Manning & Harste, 1994, p.3). Through the process of helping teachers to understand the theories and values that they base their practice on, teacher research can lead to a “better quality of teaching and learning in the classroom” and more “informed professional judgments” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 4). Stenhouse likens this process to an artist using research and development to improve his own technique for the sake of perfecting his craft: the artistic expression and the truth of his performance (1988, p. 47).

According to Lankshear and Knobel, there are many ways that teacher research can improve classroom instructions. Through professional reflection, teachers can become aware of things they are doing in their teaching that may be inadvertently and negatively impacting the progress of their students. This newfound professional awareness can lead to informed changes that can, in turn, lead to improved outcomes, for both the teacher and his students (2004, p. 5). For instance, the discovery and testing of a new invitation, such as sketch-to-stretch in the classroom, may promote a higher level of student engagement and learning (Ibid.).

Like most research fields, the increasingly popular practice of teacher research is not without its own conflicts and controversies. Fractured by competing fields, teacher research can be categorized as qualitative, quantitative, or as a third, less common category, mixed-methods. For more information on the mixed-methods qualitative approach to teacher research, see Lankshear and Knobel. Both the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach have their fair share of supporters and detractors. The

qualitative approach to teacher research, with its heavy emphasis on anecdotal observations, classroom experience and professional reflection, puts the teacher at the centre of the research. As a result, it is often perceived as a soft science by its hardline critics; its detractors arguing that it lacks the rigor and validity of statistics-driven quantitative research. Yet, to regulate the qualitative teacher research to the sidelines and declare it without merit is not only rash, but misguided and unfair.

The quantitative approach to teacher research on the other hand, focuses on proving hypotheses with large data samples, and favours the more traditional methods of theory, data collection and analysis. As a result, quantitative-based research can be a cumbersome undertaking that produces generalizable results that are impersonal and out-of-touch with real-life teaching situations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 16). In opposition to this, qualitative-based research is not about proving hypotheses or making sweeping statements. Instead, it emphasizes the uniqueness of each situation. While the findings from a specific case of qualitative research cannot be considered typical across the board, they may, nonetheless, offer valuable information and insight for others. If others learn from the research when it is made public, it is because they can relate to the experiences of the researcher and are open to “ideas created by other people at other places or in other times.” (Stenhouse, 1988, p. 45). Through this openness, teachers can perceive new possibilities for their classroom and instruction (Manning & Harste, 1994, p. 4).

With an insider’s perspective on exploring the use of sketch-to-stretch in my classroom, I decided to adopt a qualitative-approach to teacher research. As the primary instrument for data, my main data source took the form of a reflective journal, in which I

wrote about what I was seeing and hearing in the classroom (Check & Schutt, 2011, p. 256). To triangulate my data, I supplemented my observations with two norm-based student surveys, a collection of student-produced artifacts (e.g., written responses to text, and sketch-to-stretches), and an exit attitude survey on sketch-to-stretch that I devised and administered at the end of the school year.

### **3.4 Method: Case Study**

After narrowing my thesis focus, I decided on how to approach my research. Initially, I considered framing my study as an ethnography (the study of a particular culture, social setting or process grounded in the researcher's perspective as a participant-observer) and relying solely on my reflective journal to support my observations and findings. However, my primary purpose was to see if sketch-to-stretch activities made a viable and noticeable difference in the academics of one of my students. To accomplish this, I would need to collect and examine student-created representative artifacts in my teacher research. This understanding led to placing my research within the framework of a case study.

Unfortunately, as I quickly discovered, the category of *case study research* is one fraught with controversy. In fact, much confusion and debate surrounds the correct use of the term "case study" (which is often mistakenly used synonymously with casework, case method, case history, and case record), what case study research constitutes, and how it should be conducted (Merriam, 1998, p. 26). When forming my own ideas on the issue, I deferred to the writings of Sharan Merriam and her chapter on "Case studies as Qualitative Research" in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*

(1998). According to Hancock, the purpose of qualitative case study research is to gain a deeper understanding about a particular individual, group, event or organization, not to examine or create general theories for the wider public (2006, p. 34). Simply put, it is supported by a personal and professional interest in *process* as opposed to *product* (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Merriam considers a case study to be “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries that ... can ‘fence in’ what I am going to study.” (1998, p. 27). In more complex terms, “It means conducting an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence.” (Hancock, 2006, p. 15). To frame Hancock’s words in terms that Merriam might support, the researcher must ask himself if the “contemporary phenomenon” he wishes to study is bounded? In other words, how finite is the data collection involved? Is there a limit to the number of participants? Is there a finite amount of time for observations? If so, then it is a bounded case study. If not, the topic is neither specific nor bounded enough to classify as a case (Merriam, 1998, pp. 27-28). Regardless of the topic, the research is situated in a particular space and time, be it historical or present day, and tends to be descriptive and investigative in nature as well as grounded in a variety of information sources (e.g., anecdotes, interviews, and existing documents) (Hancock, 2006, pp.15-16).

### **3.5    *The Role of Ethics***

As part of my qualitative case study, I had to ensure that my teacher research observed the strict legal and ethical requirements for research involving participants. To achieve this, I began by investigating what the governing body of the Ontario College of

Teachers (OCT) deemed good professional practice in terms of teacher research and ethical conduct. According to the OCT, “The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession provide a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession.” (Teachers, Standards of Practice, 2013). These standards convey a vision of professionalism that guides the daily practices of its members, and encourages the continuation and refinement of professional knowledge through ongoing inquiry, collaboration, dialogue, reflection and research (Ibid.). As part of their membership in different learning communities, teachers must uphold the principles of ethical standards of these learning communities (Ibid.). In doing so, they follow the mandate on ethical standards in teaching.

“The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession represent a vision of professional practice ... a commitment to students and their learning. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals ...” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2013). The Ethical Standards of the Teaching Profession are: care, respect, trust, and integrity. Altogether, these four standards include a professional responsibility for developing students’ potential, honoring students’ cognitive development and confidentiality, demonstrating honesty, continual reflection, and moral action and integrity (Ibid.). While I was confident that my teacher research fulfilled the expectations of the OCT and would respect and honor the learning of my students, I still needed to meet the expectations of the school board I work for.

Not surprisingly, The Peel District School Board encourages and supports teacher research at the classroom level, and has a relatively easy application process, as long as the teacher is conducting the research in his/her own classroom or school. Their policy states that “Research conducted by a Peel staff member in his/her own school only requires the approval of the school principal.” (Instructions for External Organizations/Institutions to Conduct Studies in the Peel District School Board, 2013). After receiving the consent and support of my school’s principal (see Appendix C), I began the daunting task of applying for ethics review through Mount Saint Vincent University’s Review Ethics Coordinator (REC).

Due to the nature of my case study, it was necessary to receive approval in order to use student-created artifacts as a source of data. As part of the application process, I was required to demonstrate that my students and their parents/guardians would not be deceived during the course of the case study, and that my students would be protected from any form of mental, physical or emotional injury. As the research I was conducting was part of my normal daily teaching practice to assess the learning of my students, the latter requirements were not applicable. As part of the case study, the third grade students in my class (or, in this case, their parents/guardians) were asked to provide free and informed consent to participate in the case study. In terms of my teacher research, this took the form of an approved Informed Letter of Parental Consent that was sent home with each child in my class in June, 2013 (see Appendix D).

Of the 20 students in my class, 10 students, including the focus of my case study, Serena, returned the Informed Letter of Parental Consent signed. Their parents/guardians were given a photocopy of the letter for their own records, as per Mount Saint Vincent

University's REC instructions. Any student artifacts or pseudonyms identified or referred to in this thesis belong to those students whose parents/guardians signed the consent form. In order to protect the anonymity and privacy of my students, all identifiers were removed from the data I obtained during the regular course of my teaching practice (e.g., sketch-to-stretches) and students participating in the case study were given non-identifying pseudonyms. The students in my class, and their parents, were informed of their rights to end their participation in my teacher research at any time, and could request that their artifacts not be used in my analysis. Steps have been taken to ensure that all collected and coded data will be stored for the required five year period and then destroyed. After two revisions, I was issued a Research Ethics Clearance Certificate by the REC on June 11, 2013 (see Appendix E).

### **3.6 Data Collection**

Using data collected from classroom activities that typically occurred as part of my daily teaching practices (e.g., student artifacts), and those undertaken specifically for the purpose of this research (e.g., my reflective teacher's journal), I followed Check and Schutt's advice, and made sure that any activities I conducted complemented, not conflicted with my teaching (2011, p. 260). In this respect, "becoming a knower as well as a doer served as self-initiated professional development that improved [my] teaching." (Ibid.).

Data were gathered by a variety of methods. My data sources included double-entry field notes collected from anecdotal observations of the participants; collected documents (Ontario Student Records, academic journals and texts); the collection of

students' artifacts (e.g., sketch-to-stretches and assigned written responses to texts); close-ended surveys (Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, Elementary Writing Attitude Survey, Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey); and general knowledge of my students gleaned from day-to-day conversations in the classroom (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, pp. 35-37). During the school year, I kept a journal in which I chronicled my written reflections before, during and after data collection (Check & Schutt, 2011, p. 267). The combination of triangulation and reflexivity (the "conscious, critical self-awareness by individuals ... about their own preconceptions, biases, and assumptions both before the research begins and as it unfolds") lent validity to my research (Check & Schutt, 2011, p. 266).

An initial group of participants was selected according to the difficulties they experienced with reading and writing. Four students using the pseudonyms DM, LM, Serena and ZK, fell into the category of reluctant writers. Three students using the pseudonyms TA, SL and SV, had previously been identified as at-risk/struggling readers by our In-School Review Committee (ISRC). Three of the seven students selected were on informal IEPs. One student was on a formal IEP for language impairment. After considerable reflection, I decided to make my case study more manageable, and narrow my focus to one student. While Chapter Four will detail the selection process I used, the overriding deciding factor was the attitude this student demonstrated during the administration of two literacy-based surveys at the beginning of the school year, and her performance on the fall CASI literacy test. In all three instances, this student demonstrated a high interest in reading for pleasure, and was in fact, one of the best

readers in the class, while displaying a great, and habitual, reluctance toward writing. A profile of this student, identified by the pseudonym Serena, appears in Chapter Four.

For the case study, I examined a series of four sketch-to-stretches that were completed by Serena as part of our daily instructional activities over the course of the school year. To gain a wider range of data, the sketch-to-stretches were integrated into a variety of different subjects (e.g., social studies, science, language) and were in response to a variety of different text formats (e.g., poetry, non-fiction, fictional narrative, etc.) normally taught throughout the school year. The four selected pieces were all summative in nature and in response to similar questions (e.g., What is the text's main idea?). The sketch-to-stretches were then coded (designated with identifying codes for student, date and themes) and assessed according to a teacher-derived rubric, similar to the ones used by EQAO test scorers (see Chapters Five and Six and Table 5.1.2).

Serena's sketch-to-stretches were compared to four reader-responses that she wrote during the months of April, 2013 to May, 2013. These responses took the standard form of a paragraph consisting of six-eight sentences in length, including topic and closing sentences. As part of her written responses, Serena was asked to identify the text/author's main idea, and use evidence from the text and her own experiences to support her ideas. The written responses were then coded and assessed according to either an EQAO-developed rubric, or a teacher-derived rubric (see Chapters Five and Six). As with the selected sketch-to-stretches, the four written responses were chosen because they represented a variety of different text formats, and integrated with themes/topics we were already learning about in class. The texts themselves were chosen because of their relationship to topics being studied in class, and their association with

students' prior experiences/schema and knowledge. To ensure that one activity did not influence the student's performance on another, no effort was made to correlate the topic of a particular sketch-to-stretch to a written response activity. For example, students were not asked to first write a paragraph describing the main idea of Patricia MacLachlan's, *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and then create a sketch-to-stretch depicting their feelings when Sarah arrived at the Witting cabin in, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

### 3.7 *Data Analysis*

In this section, I briefly outline the models by which I compared and assessed Serena's sketch-to-stretches and traditional written responses. I began by reviewing Louise Rosenblatt's seminal work on literary response. According to Rosenblatt, there are two different purposes for reading: one is to gain information (she refers to this purpose as *efferent*), while the other is to read for pleasure (she refers to this purpose as *aesthetic*). When I use these terms in my thesis, I do so within the framework of Rosenblatt's classic interpretation of reader-response. According to Rosenblatt, these stances are on a continuum, and a reader can slip from one stance to the next as she negotiates the slippery slope between reading for information and reading for entertainment (Le Cren, 1997, p. 20). Le Cren provides the example of a person reading a newspaper editorial to learn about a controversial topic (an efferent stance), while simultaneously appreciating the particular flair of the writer's prose (an aesthetic stance) (Ibid.).

Serena's text responses were also assessed according to how well they reflected her ability to comprehend, and make connections with the text. When making meaning,

students are traditionally asked to make three types of connections: text-to-self (making connections between the text and themselves and their prior experiences/schema); text-to-text (making connections between the text and another text the student has read or heard); and text-to-world (making connections between the text and the student's experiences with the greater world). According to Hennen, in order for students to make higher-level connections and have a deeper understanding of a text, they need to make connections with what they are reading and thinking about it (2009, p. 44). Or as Berkhardt writes, "Teaching children to connect reading to what they know is a great first strategy because every child has emotions, opinions, and personal experiences to which they can connect and make reading experiences more meaningful." (2009, p. 24). In terms of text-to-self connections, this means grounding the text in authentic life experiences for the student. Text-to-self connections/responses are aesthetic in nature, and allow the reader to become immersed and invested in the story and its characters, and in the process, gain more insight into the story's message.

Text-to-text connections, as with text-to-world connections, can present a challenge for students, particularly young children who have had limited experience with literature or the world. Each student's cultural and linguistic background influences his perceptions of a text (Hennan, 2009, p. 46). Making text-to-text connections is looking for similarities between a new story and a previously read or heard story (Ibid.). When students do this, they often choose to take an efferent, factual stance and make comparisons between the titles, storybook covers, setting, plot (e.g., events, problem and resolution), and characters. Unlike text-to-self connections, the process of making text-to-text connections does not always come easily and, as a result, it may require direct

teacher modeling and scaffolding before students are able to continue independently. This should not however, discourage teachers from teaching them. Text-to-text connections can lead to higher-level thinking, and aid students with synthesizing and making inferences about a new text. For instance, a student may feel confident in predicting that if the big bad wolf blew down the little pig's house in *The Three Little Pigs*, then the big bad pig character will do the same to the little wolf in *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (Ibid.).

Text-to-world connections are the larger connections that students make between texts they read and the world around them. These connections may reflect the students' understanding of current events, historical events and figures, and popular culture and technology. As connections are outside of their personal experiences, they are more difficult for students to make, especially if the students are young. As with text-to-text connections, direct teacher modeling plays an important role in how successful a student is with this comprehension strategy. Students need to be encouraged to make connections beyond the surface, efferent/informative level. Conversely, teachers need to ensure that their students have ample opportunity to explore world-centered events and information, and conduct inquiry-based investigations into topics that interest them.

## Chapter Four: The Selection Process

### 4.1 *Introduction*

In sections two and three of this chapter, I discuss the results of the two attitude surveys (the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and Writing Attitude Survey) students were asked to complete at the beginning of the school year. In section four, I summarize what I learned from their administration, and how this knowledge was used to narrow the focus of my case study. In the final section, I provide a profile of Serena, the student selected as the focus of my teacher research qualitative case study.

### 4.2 *The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey*

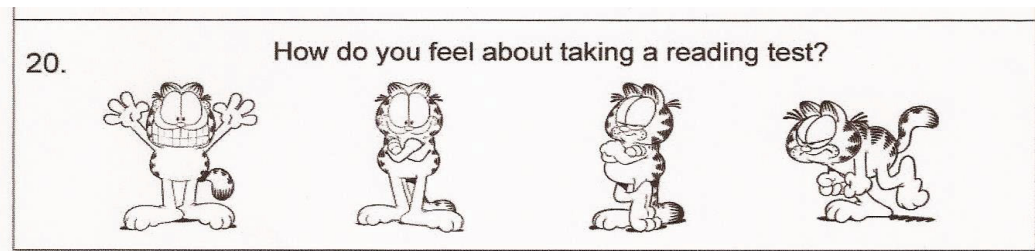
To gain a better understanding of my students' feelings toward different literacy-based activities, those performed at school and those typically performed beyond the school's walls, I administered two attitude surveys early on in the school year. These undertakings marked my first foray into data collection and analysis. The first survey I administered was the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), developed by Michael C. McKenna and Dennis J. Kear. This survey, along with its counterpart, the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS), can be found in two articles that appeared in the practitioner journal, *The Reading Teacher*, in 1990 and 2000 respectively, as well as on the *Professor Garfield* website ( [www.professorgarfield.org](http://www.professorgarfield.org)). In the article "Measuring Attitude Toward Reading: A New Tool for Teachers" (1990), McKenna and Kear reference the writings of contemporary psycholinguist Frank Smith who wrote: "the emotional response to reading ... is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read." (p. 626). In other words, a child's

attitude and engagement play a large role in how he becomes literate. It goes without saying that if teachers knew the reading and writing interests of their students, they could capitalize on these interests and schema, and use them to foster or reinforce a deeper love of literacy. With this in mind, McKenna and Kear decided that there was a need for a public-domain instrument that enabled teachers to efficiently and reliably estimate the attitude levels of their students toward reading and writing (Ibid.). Thus, the ERAS and WAS were created.

When developing the ERAS survey, McKenna and Kear agreed that certain criteria had to be met. First, they wanted to ensure that the survey had a large-scale normative frame of reference (Ibid.). To accomplish this, the test was administered to over 18,000 children, grades one to six, in 1989 (1990, p. 632). Secondly, it was comprised of desirable psychometric properties, and empirically documented to be reliable and valid (1990, p. 626). The survey also needed to be applicable to all elementary students, grades one through six, and possess a meaningful, child-friendly format that alleviated any anxiety students might feel when answering the questions (Ibid.). Lastly, the survey was comprised of separate subscales for recreational and academic reading, as purpose and setting often influence a child's feelings (McKenna and Kear, 1990, p. 627).

Using a four point scale, ranging from very happy to very upset, students are entreated to answer 20 "How do you feel ...?" questions about academic and recreational reading. To reduce any nervousness that the students may feel, pictures of the comic-strip character Garfield are used to represent the different attitudes toward reading (for

an example, see Appendix F) (Ibid.). For a detailed description of the technical aspects of the ERAS, please see McKenna and Kear (1990).



***Figure 4.2.1: Question 20 of the ERAS  
(Kear, Dennis J.)***

Following the directions provided in the administrator's guide, I invited my third grade class of 20 students to complete the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. After introducing the survey and explaining that its purpose was to help me learn more about their feelings toward reading, I encouraged my students to provide honest answers and not concern themselves with what they thought I wanted to see. Although I followed the suggestions made by McKenna and Kear, and emphasized that this was not a test, and that there were no 'right' answers, I still found myself fielding several questions regarding how long the test would take and how many marks it was worth. Upon completion, I even overheard one student mention to a classmate how easy he thought the test had been as he submitted it. Only on one point did I deviate from the provided administering instructions, and this was when it came to reading each question out loud. Since my students are in the third grade, I felt they were sufficiently capable of independently reading and answering the survey's questions, which are written in juvenile language. I did, however, provide assistance if it was asked for (e.g., rereading a question for a child, explaining the meaning of an unknown word).

After using the provided guide to score the surveys, I interpreted each student's attitude toward academic and recreational reading. As part of the process, McKenna and Kear provide two options for interpreting scores. The first option involves informally determining where a score falls within the four nodes on the scale (very happy, slightly happy, mildly upset, and very upset). McKenna and Kear provide the example of a total score of 50, which falls about midway on the scale of 80, and thus indicates a relatively indifferent attitude toward reading, in general (1990, p. 631). The second option allows educators to take a more formal approach and, using the table they devised and provided, convert each student's raw score into a percentile according to grade level. An average percentile rank can also be determined for the entire class. It must be noted that the national grade level rankings and percentiles compiled by McKenna and Kear are based on the data collected from their case study of American elementary students in 1988. Thus, when I refer to the 'national average' or 'norm,' I am referring to the American national average, not Canadian. While the rankings and percentile may not be 100 percent accurate to present-day, they do nonetheless, provide a glimpse into each student's general attitude toward literacy, and provide the teacher with a rough baseline for comparing his students' attitudes with others of the same age and grade.

While I initially began my case study by examining the responses of all 20 students, I soon decided to narrow my focus to one student, Serena. Serena was selected in part because of her unusual response to the ERAS and WAS. When asked to give an honest response to questions regarding recreational reading (e.g., Question 3: How do you feel about reading for fun at home?), Serena scored 30/40, indicating a happy attitude toward recreational reading. When asked about her feelings toward academic reading

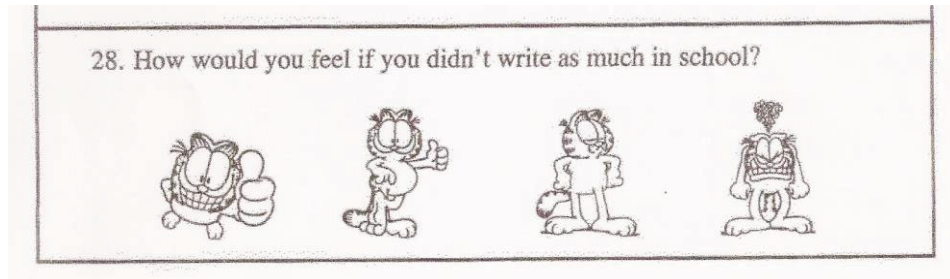
(e.g., Question 14: How do you feel about reading your school books?), Serena scored 18/40, demonstrating a mildly upset attitude. From these scores, it was easy to see that Serena's attitude toward reading for pleasure was significantly more positive than her attitude toward academic, school-based reading. When compared to the average combined score of her classmates, Serena, with a total raw score of 48/80, fell below my class' average of 59/80. However, her raw score placed her attitude toward reading above that of the average third grade student (according to the norm).

#### **4.3 *The Writing Attitude Survey***

A year later, in 2000, McKenna and Kear, now joined by co-authors Coffman and Ambrosio, developed an attitude assessment instrument for writing, appropriately named the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) (see Appendix G). According to the authors, the WAS, in conjunction with other assessment tools (e.g., reading conferences, interest surveys, etc.) can provide teachers with insight into helping their students write better and enjoy writing more (Kear, 2000, p. 10). As with its counterpart, the ERAS, I administered the WAS to my entire class, and asked the students to complete their surveys independently. Students were closely monitored and any questions that arose were addressed.

It should be noted that unlike ERAS, which consists of 20 questions; 10 on recreational reading and 10 on academic reading, the WAS consists of 28 questions, all of which fall under the general umbrella of 'writing.' As a result, only a total raw score is determinable. As with the ERAS, the image of Garfield was once again used and students were instructed to circle one of the above-mentioned four nodes scale to indicate

their attitude toward writing. Like the ERAS, the norm set forth was determined by an American case study conducted by Kear et al. For more information on this 1997 case study, see Kear et al.



***Figure 4.3.1: Question 28 of the WAS  
(Kear, Dennis J.)***

My class of 20 students provided an average score of 77.15/112, above the national norm (e.g., the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile rank), indicating that my class demonstrates a positive attitude toward writing overall. Moreover, my class possesses a more positive attitude toward writing than reading. Again, I found this response surprising as writing is often perceived as the more complex and arduous endeavor of the two. What also struck me was Serena's overall negative attitude toward writing. From comparing the data, I learned that Serena scored 51/112, ranking in the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile. Her attitude scored below the national average as well as my class' average by a significant margin. I could not help but reflect in my journal on why Serena enjoyed reading, but disliked writing so much. It seemed an unusual attitude to have.

It is important to keep in mind that "as children move from grade to grade, their attitude toward writing generally worsens" (Kear et al, 2000, p. 15). According to Kear et al, there are many reasons why this change may occur. For example, students eventually come to realize that good writing requires effort and time (Ibid.). For some students, writing can also be a tedious and repetitious task that lacks choice (e.g., students

are instructed by the teacher to write an essay or write a book report) (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, along the way, students may also receive negative feedback from peers and teachers that can dampen their interest (Ibid.). Any of these reasons can act as a deterrent for some students. For instance, Serena indicated negative feelings when asked “How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?” (Question 24). She also indicated that she felt mildly upset when asked to check her spelling with a dictionary (Question 26). She also circled that she felt mildly upset when the teacher asked her to go back and change some of her writing (Question 20). After all, what is more tedious than the process of proofreading and revising your writing, especially for a reluctant writer? With her above responses in mind, it is not surprising that Serena expressed that she would be very happy if she didn’t have to write as much in school (Question 28).

#### ***4.4 Summary of Results and Selection Process***

From administering the two attitude surveys, the ERAS and WAS, during the first couple of weeks of school in September, I learned that Serena, while clearly demonstrating a positive attitude toward both reading for pleasure (a more aesthetic process), slightly disliked reading for information (a more efferent process) in the classroom setting. However, when it came to writing, Serena consistently demonstrated a negative attitude, falling within the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile of students who enjoyed writing. The writing she produced in class, especially when asked to write a reader response to a text read either independently or by myself, was typically poor and underdeveloped. It also failed to accurately capture her understanding (see Figure 1.3.1). With Serena’s

responses to both attitude surveys in mind, she represented the student I wanted to help the most, one who was reluctant to engage in traditional writing activities. As a result, I decided that Serena, a student known to thrive during activities that appealed to her artistic nature, would be an ideal participant for my case study on sketch-to-stretch as an alternative assessment for reading comprehension.

#### **4.5 *Student Profile: Serena***

Serena is a bright, nine year old female who I had the pleasure of teaching in senior kindergarten prior to teaching her again in the third grade. Serena enjoys participating in environmental activities, and arts and crafts projects. Raised in a strong Christian household, Serena's parents separated this year, and she initially experienced difficulty coping with her new, unsettled living arrangements and family dynamics (her brother and father moved out of the family home and currently live with Serena's grandmother). Her mother, recently diagnosed with fibromyalgia, had to take a leave of absence from her job, and now receives disability benefits at home. In reaction to the upheaval in her life, Serena often displays school avoidance and refusal behavior, which her mother occasionally indulges, taking the form of 30 absences from school and 19 late arrivals during the 2012-2013 academic year. While her attitude toward school has gradually improved during the course of the year, Serena began school in September appearing depressed and despondent, and had trouble making and maintaining friendships with her peers. The victim of bullying, she began to demonstrate increasing insensitivity and aggression toward others in the classroom and on the playground when standing up for herself.

Serena's parents have always encouraged reading at home, and have created a very literate environment for their child. Serena's mother frequently borrows books from the community library for Serena, and purchases books as gifts for her daughter through our monthly school book orders. Serena regularly visits the online reading program Raz-Kids ([www.raz-kids.com](http://www.raz-kids.com)) and proudly boasts of reading all the books in the Geronimo Stilton series. For Christmas, Serena received her own iPad to access e-books online, so she could read in bed before going to sleep. Due to her love of reading, Serena has a well-formed vocabulary, and began the third grade scoring a 65 (equivalent to grade 3.2) on the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), which assesses a child's general progress in reading and ability to pronounce words. When assessed at the end of the school year, using the Nelson PM Benchmark Reading Assessment Resource Kit, Serena was reading and comprehending texts at the approximate equivalent of a grade 4-5 level.

While Serena enjoys reading, she greatly dislikes writing. She frequently displays reluctance toward writing and is often overheard asking, "Do I have to?" or stating, "I do not want to." when asked to complete a writing task. She also uses avoidance techniques, such as regularly requesting to use the washroom, or asking to drink from the class water fountain. Serena is often observed walking around the room, staring out the window, or socializing with friends when she is expected to be focused on completing an independent writing task. Serena consistently requires teacher encouragement and prompting to finish written tasks. She is given twice the allotted time usually taken by her peers to complete a task, and is often asked to stay in at recess to finish incomplete work. Any remaining uncompleted assignments are sent home as homework, to be finished and returned to school the following day. Aware of her daughter's behavior at

school, and the reluctance Serena shows toward written tasks, Serena's mother tries, with limited success, to encourage a strong work ethic at home, and enforce consequences when Serena misbehaves (e.g., the loss of privileges, such as the use of her iPad or free-time on the home computer). Unfortunately, Serena's parents are inconsistent in their expectations for her academic performance and behaviour, and this is reflected in Serena's attitude toward school.

Taking Gardner's advice into consideration, I made careful observation of Serena before identifying her as a reluctant writer (2009, p. 36). According to Gardner's guidelines, Serena is not your typical reluctant writer. For instance, her upbringing has provided her with a wealth of life and literacy experiences (2009, p. 33). Serena is also a creative, imaginative child, who loves to read, and has a good memory for recalling story events and what to write (Ibid.). Serena is a very competent speller, with good fine motor control and neat penmanship (Ibid.). Yet, for all her strengths, she is still reluctant to write her ideas on paper independently. Serena is habitually superficial with her writing, producing underdeveloped work, which lacks both quality and quantity (2009, p.35). For some unknown reason, Serena lacks self-esteem when it comes to writing (Ibid.). When asked how she feels about writing, she always gives the same simplistic answer, "I do not like it." "It's hard."

## Chapter Five: Data Analysis

### 5.1 *Introduction*

As part of the data analysis process, all collected data was coded and sorted according to the task and its author-participant. To ensure the privacy of my students and provide anonymity, all initial identifiers were removed (either clipped or redacted) and replaced with pseudonyms. In April, we began a series of practice review questions in class to help students prepare for the reading and writing sections on the EQAO test. Over a period of two months (April, 2013 to May, 2013), students read a variety of unfamiliar texts, and were asked to answer eight comprehension questions (see Table 1.3.1), five of which were selected and analyzed for the purpose of this study. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Section 3.6, the texts selected ranged in format and theme, including narratives, graphic texts, and poems. Throughout the school year, students were invited to engage in a series of sketch-to-stretch exercises in response to “main idea” comprehension questions on a variety of texts. These texts were all unfamiliar to the students and were either read independently by the students, or as part of a shared or read aloud experience. Table 5.1.1 provides an outline of the texts students were asked to respond to, and the method of their response.

**Table 5.1.1: Written Response Titles & Sketch-to-Stretch Titles  
Texts Analyzed**

WRITTEN READER-RESPONSES			SKETCH-TO-STRETCH READER-RESPONSES		
TEXT	AUTHOR	FORM	TEXT	AUTHOR	FORM
<i>The Nest</i>	Unknown (EQAO, Student Booklet: Language 1, Spring 2010)	Short Narrative	<i>The Rough-Face Girl</i>	Rafe Martin	Long Narrative (fractured fairy tale)
<i>My Café Menu</i>	Unknown (EQAO, Student Booklet: Language 1, Spring 2007)	Graphic Text	<i>Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.</i>	Doreen Rappaport	Narrative Text
<i>Earth Day</i>	Jane Yolen (adapted from)	Poem	“Tomorrow”	Peter Blue Cloud	Poem
<i>Earth Day</i>	Kelly Hashway	Short Narrative	<i>EQAO Testing Booklets: Language 1 and Language 2</i>	EQAO	Mixed
<i>The Ice Cream Taster</i>	Unknown (EQAO, Student Booklet: Language 2, Spring 2009)	Poem			

The majority of the texts, and follow-up comprehension questions, were taken from past EQAO student language booklets. In two cases, I provided the texts and devised the questions. However, the format of the questions and the teacher-derived rubric (Table 5.1.2) used to score the students’ responses were based upon parameters established by EQAO, and my own past experiences as an EQAO scorer. In Sections 5.2 to 5.6 of this chapter, I examine and assess five of Serena’s written responses to texts in terms of topic development and overall level of depicted reading comprehension. These responses are then compared to the sketch-to-stretches she drew in reaction to four different texts. Each sketch-to-stretch is examined in terms of how it could theoretically be scored according to the EQAO scoring guidelines or the teacher-derived rubric.

**Table 5.1.2 Teacher-Derived Rubric for Written Responses & Sketch-to-Stretch Responses**  
**Teacher-Derived Rubric**

LEVEL	1	2	3	4
Identify the Main Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response makes <u>no attempt</u> to explain the text’s main idea, OR</li> <li>Attempt is illegible (or drawing un-interpretable).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response indicates a <u>partial</u> understanding of the text’s main idea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response indicates a <u>basic</u> understanding of the text’s main idea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response indicates a <u>well-developed</u> understanding of the text’s main idea.</li> </ul>
Provide Evidence From The Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student answers an aspect of the question (incomplete), OR</li> <li>Does not refer to the reading selection (off-topic), OR</li> <li>Provides <u>inaccurate</u> support (off-topic).</li> </ul>	<p>The student’s answer provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Irrelevant</u> support from the reading selection, OR</li> <li><u>Vague</u> support from the reading selection, OR</li> <li><u>Limited</u> support.</li> </ul> <p>The response requires the reader to connect the reason to what it is intended to prove.</p>	<p>The student’s answer provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Some accurate</u> and <u>relevant</u> support, OR</li> <li><u>Some vague</u> or <u>underdeveloped</u> support.</li> </ul> <p>The response requires the reader to make some connections between the reason and what it is intended to prove.</p>	<p>The student’s answer provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Specific</u> and <u>relevant</u> support.</li> </ul> <p>The response connects the reason to what it is intended to prove and the text without the reader having to infer meaning.</p>
Include Your Own Ideas: Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, Text-to-World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student <u>does not</u> attempt to connect the text to his/her personal experiences, OR</li> <li>Student <u>does not</u> attempt to connect the text and information learned to other familiar texts, OR</li> <li>Student <u>does not</u> attempt to connect the text to his/her ideas to the world, OR</li> <li>Attempt is <u>irrelevant/off-topic</u> (does not relate to the text).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student attempts to connect the text to his/her personal experiences, but attempt is <u>vague or vicarious</u> (the connection between text and experience did not happen to the student).</li> <li>Student attempts to connect the text and information learned to other familiar texts, but attempt is <u>vague</u>.</li> <li>Student attempts to connect the text to his/her ideas of the world, but attempt is <u>vague</u>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student connects the text to his/her personal experiences with <u>some accurate</u> and <u>relevant</u> support, OR</li> <li>Student connects the text and information learned to other familiar texts, with <u>some accurate</u> and <u>relevant</u> support, OR</li> <li>Student connects the text to his/her ideas of the world with <u>some accurate</u> and <u>relevant</u> support, OR</li> <li>Attempt is <u>vague</u> or <u>underdeveloped</u>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student connects the text to his/her personal experiences with <u>specific</u> and <u>relevant</u> support.</li> <li>Student connects the text and information learned to other familiar texts with <u>specific</u> and <u>relevant</u> support.</li> <li>Student connects the text to his/her ideas of the world with <u>specific</u> and <u>relevant</u> support.</li> </ul>

As noted above, the teacher-derived rubric is based upon the language and expectations used by the EQAO organization to score Student Language Booklets. Of the eight written reader-response questions my students answered during the months of April and May, six were taken from EQAO Language Booklets. Before creating my own rubric to assess non-EQAO questions and sketch-to-stretch activities with, I closely examined the descriptors used to level the six EQAO Reading Open-Response Questions. It quickly became apparent that a standard language and description for each level existed across the six sets. With minor exception, I mirrored the language set out by EQAO in my own rubric. I deviated in only two areas: first, I used the more generalized terminology “Identify the Main Idea;” and secondly, I specified the types of connections (text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world) I expected students to demonstrate when using their own ideas to support their answers.

Section 5.7 addresses an anomaly that arose when examining Serena’s fifth written reader-response; this anomaly stands alone and is not compared to a sketch-to-stretch. See Chapter Three, section 3.6 for an explanation on why these particular texts and follow-up responses were selected for assessment.

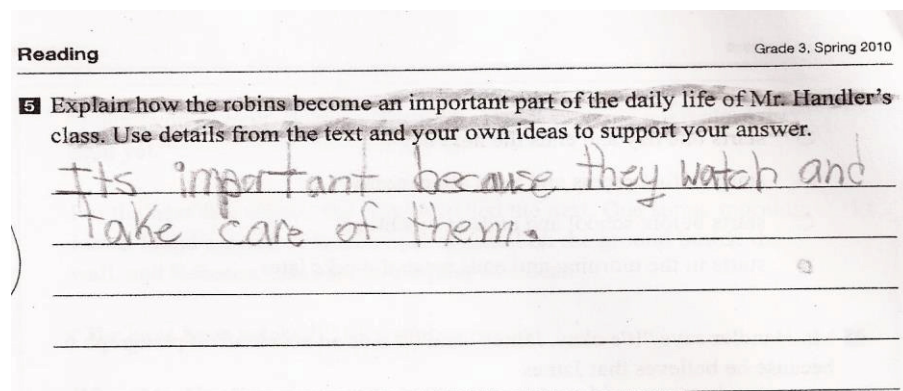
## **5.2 Comparison # 1: “The Nest” and “The Rough-Face Girl”**

### **5.2.1 “The Nest”**

“The Nest,” a text taken from the *EQAO Spring 2010 Student Booklet: Language 1* (pp.3-4), is a two-page story about a class that discovers two robins building a nest where a broken light used to be on school property. Over the next few weeks, the class observes the robins complete their nest and lay eggs. Eventually the eggs hatch and the

children, excited to see the newborn nestlings, watch the robins care for them. To prevent the new family of robins from being displaced, the class decides that the school should not replace the broken light.

Students were given 40 minutes to read the text and answer four multiple-choice questions on its content and write a written response to question 5. All questions were taken directly from the *Student Assessment Booklet*. Question 5 reads: *Explain how the robins become an important part of the daily life of Mr. Handler's class. Use details from the text and your own ideas to support your answer.* Students were asked to write their responses following the EQAO test guidelines: do not write outside the space provided, do not use a dictionary for unknown words, do not ask the teacher for assistance. It should be noted that the majority of the class encountered difficulty responding to this question. Of the 20 students who participated in the exercise, one achieved a Level B/I; 13 achieved a Level 1; and six achieved a Level 2. No students achieved a Level 3 (the provincial standard of achievement) or above (see Table 1, Section 1.3). When assessed against the EQAO rubric and exemplars, Serena achieved a Level 2. The following is her response to Question Five:



The image shows a handwritten response on a lined paper. At the top left, the word "Reading" is printed. At the top right, "Grade 3, Spring 2010" is printed. The prompt is: "5 Explain how the robins become an important part of the daily life of Mr. Handler's class. Use details from the text and your own ideas to support your answer." The student's response is written in cursive: "Its important because they watch and take care of them." The word "Its" is misspelled as "Its".

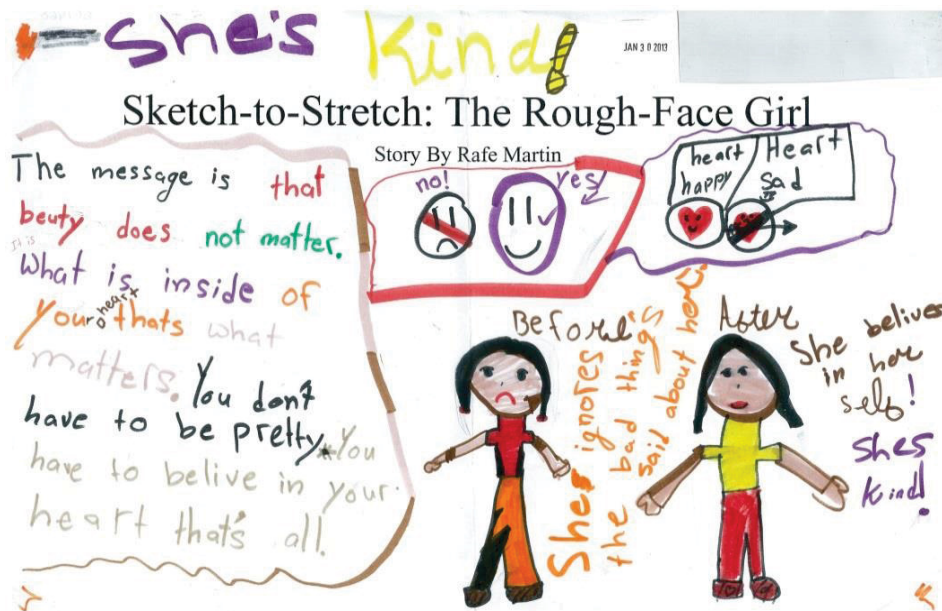
**Figure 5.2.1: EQAO Written Response Prompt #1: "The Nest" (Serena, May 22, 2013)**

According to descriptor from the *Scoring Guide for Reading Open-Response Short Narrative (“The Nest”) Question 5*, Serena’s answer “indicates a partial understanding of how the robins become an important part of the daily life of Mr. Handler’s class. [The] Response provides: vague support from the reading selection or limited support (e.g., “because they [the class] watch and take care of them [the robins]”). The response ... “requires the reader to connect the reason to what it is intended to prove” (Spring 2010). Although Serena did not experience any difficulty with decoding and comprehending the narrative, her answer clearly falls short of demonstrating her full understanding. Her answer, distilled to one simple sentence, lacks proper conventions and grammar, and explains very little about how the robins become an integral part of Mr. Handler’s class. Her answer takes up on only one and a half lines of the five provided. When comparing her response to the APE formula (see Section 1.3 for a description), it lacks an opening topic sentence; detailed supporting evidence from the text, her own ideas to support her answer, and a closing sentence. Making no effort to identify who the “they” [the students] and “them” [the robins] are in the text with specific information, Serena forces the reader to infer her meaning. Serena’s response tells the reader very little about how she makes meaning as an active participant in the reading process. Regardless of whether or not she in fact understands the text, she scores a Level 2 on her response, and according to EQAO, is achieving below provincial standards in reading and writing (a student, who at the time of writing this test, was reading at the grade 4/5 level).

### 5.2.2 “*The Rough-Face Girl*”

During our third grade unit on Aboriginals, I read *The Rough-Face Girl* by Rafe Martin to my class. *The Rough-Face Girl* is a poignant Algonquin tale reminiscent of the childhood Cinderella story. In this tale, a powerful Invisible Being lives with his sister in a great wigwam near a forest. Several ambitious women, who live in the neighbouring village, relentlessly compete for the affections of the Invisible Being and his hand in marriage. The rough-face girl, who is terribly scarred from toiling by the hot fire day in and day out for her cruel and vain sisters, is teased because of her outward deformity and quiet nature. The rough-face girl succeeds where her beautiful sisters fail, and wins the heart of the Invisible Being, because her character is kind and her soul pure.

After listening to me read aloud the story, students were asked to sketch their response to the *Rough-Face Girl*. The choice of what they wanted to depict and how they went about doing so, was left to each student’s discretion. Students were given a variety of writing materials to work with, such as crayons, pencil crayons, markers, and pastels, and 60 minutes to work within. See Figure 10 for Serena’s sketch-to-stretch: *The Rough-Face Girl*.



**Figure 5.2.2: Sketch-to-Stretch: “The Rough-Face Girl”**  
(Serena, January 30, 2013)

Using Crayola markers, Serena uses a combination of images and text (both printed and cursive) to convey her understanding of the story and the author’s main idea. Grouping and organizing her ideas with boxes, she writes: “The message is that beauty [sic] does not matter. What is inside of your heart that [sic] what matters. You do not have to be pretty. You have to believe in your heart, that’s all.” (Serena, January 30, 2013). Reinforcing this message, Serena draws two pictures of the rough-face girl (left to right): before her transformation in which her face still shows the tragic effects of the fire, and after her transformation where her scars have been healed. For the first image, labelled by Serena as “Before,” she draws the rough-face girl visibly upset, with a large brown scar marring the lower right portion of her face. Serena describes her illustration with the sentence, “She ignores the bad things said about her” (in the story, the rough-face girl is teased because of her appearance). In the second image, labelled by Serena as “After,” she writes: “She believes in her self [sic]! Shes [sic] kind!” The latter sentiment

is emphasized and repeated at the top of the paper where Serena writes in large, colourful lettering: *She's Kind!* Using the simple graphic images of a smiley face (labelled “Yes”) and a frowny face (labelled “No”) as well as two hearts, one smiling (labelled “heart happy”) and one frowning (labelled “heart sad”). Serena reiterates the tale’s message that the rough-face girl begins the story in a state of unhappiness, but later finds contentment and peace within herself and her place with the Invisible Being (a representative of nature and the greater world).

Not only does the visible effort invested in her sketch-to-stretch attest to Serena’s greater level of engagement in this activity than the previously mentioned written reader-response, so does the number of lines she has written. Including the two sentences written to describe her “Before” and “After” images of the rough-face girl, Serena wrote a total of six full sentences in her sketch-to-stretch as opposed to the one sentence she wrote in response to “The Nest.” In her response to *The Rough-Face Girl*, Serena also makes text-to-self and text-to-world connections as seen in her inference that, although the rough-face girl ignores the bad things others say about her, she is nonetheless unhappy, and her heart is sad. One could claim that Serena is making a personal connection between the plight of the rough-face girl and her own experiences with being bullied and teased about her appearance at school. Serena, a biracial child, has been teased because of her curly hair and light brown complexion. Serena has also been teased by her peers for being overweight. In other words, Serena demonstrates an understanding of the text (e.g., beauty is only skin deep and it is what is inside that counts) and provides some accurate and relevant support from the text (e.g., an image of the rough-face girl before she is healed by the Invisible Being, and the ridicule she is subjected to). When

assessed by the Teacher-Derived Rubric (see Table 5.1.2), Serena’s comprehension of *The Rough-Face Girl* scores as a Level 3. To achieve a Level 4, she would need to include “specific and relevant support,” such as a direct quotation from the text, to justify her ideas.

### **5.3 Comparison # 2: “My Café Menu” and “I Have a Dream”**

#### **5.3.1 “My Café Menu”**

To complement our past unit on healthy eating, and to engage the class’ prior knowledge on what constitutes a healthy meal, students were asked to read the graphic text, “My Café Menu,” from the Grade 3, Reading section of the *EQAO Student Booklet: Language 1* (Spring 2007). As with the previous writing tasks for “The Nest,” each student was given 40 minutes of class time to independently read the graphic text, a one-page replica of a restaurant menu (see Figure 11), and answer a combination of four multiple-choice questions on content and vocabulary, and two short-answer comprehension questions. As with all of the reader-response written activities undertaken in class as part of our EQAO test review, students were only given a pencil, eraser, ruler and highlighter for materials. As this text was selected from the Reading portion of the EQAO Language Test, students were not allowed the use of a dictionary or thesaurus to support their answers or understanding. Nor were they allowed to appeal for help from me, to read the questions, decode any unfamiliar words, or reword the question in friendlier terms.

Grade 3, Spring 2007 Reading

### My Café Menu

**To Start**

**Nachos \$2.75**  
Our warm nachos are served with mild, medium or hot sauce.

**Rolls \$1.30**  
Baked fresh every day, our rolls are a favourite!

**Bread and Jam \$1.95**  
Our bread is baked fresh each day. Choose from strawberry, raspberry or blueberry jam.

**Carrot Sticks \$1.15**  
Cut thin or thick, these carrots are juicy either way!

**Celery Sticks \$1.45**  
Served with cream cheese or peanut butter. They're a real crowd-pleaser.

**Soup of the Day \$2.00**  
Please ask your server about the soup of the day.

---

**Main Course**

**Macaroni \$3.95**  
Baked in a wood-burning oven, this dish always comes out right!

**Stir-Fry \$4.25**  
Choose your own three-vegetable combination to make your plate sizzle.

**Chili \$4.25**  
There is nothing chilly about this meal!

**Rice and Beans \$3.95**  
This yummy dish is the perfect blend of mild and spicy.

**Spaghetti \$4.25**  
A café favourite! Noodles come thin or thick—your choice.

**Cheese Pizza \$4.25**  
Lots of gooey goodness on a thin crust.

**On the Side**

**Onion Rings \$2.00**  
Made right here, these treats are crunchy and sweet.

**Veggies and Dip \$2.00**  
Choose from ranch, sour cream or Italian dip.

**French Fries \$2.00**  
Home-cut fries are crisp on the outside, soft on the inside!

**Salad \$2.00**  
It's your choice of garden, Greek or Caesar salad.

**Dessert**

*Different flavours are available every day!  
Ask your server for details.*

**Pie or Cake \$2.55**

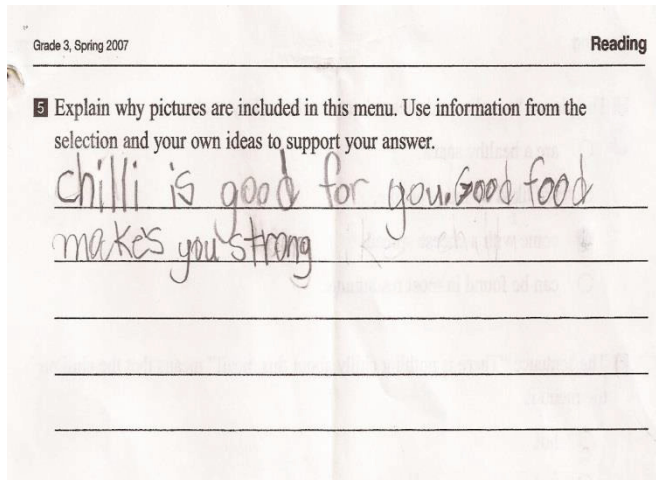
**Ice Cream \$1.55**

**Fruit Salad \$1.75**

© EQAO, 2006  
Student Booklet: Language 1 1

**Figure 5.3: EQAO Graphic Text: My Cafe Menu  
(Student Booklet: Language 1, Spring 2007)**

During the allotted time of 40 minutes, Serena answered the four multiple-choice questions on “My Café Menu” and attempted to answer the first short-answer question (see Figure 12). She left the second short-answer question blank. For the purposes of this case study, I examined her answer to *Question 5: Explain why pictures are included in this menu. Use information from the selection and your own ideas to support your answer.*



**Figure 5.3.1: EQAO Written Response Prompt #2: My Cafe Menu (Serena, April 2013)**

In response to Question 5, Serena writes two sentences: “chilli [sic] is good for you. Good food make’s [sic] you strong” (Serena, April 2013). While Serena makes an attempt to answer the question (in that she does not leave the response box blank), she fails to demonstrate an understanding that features of a text, such as pictures, have a purpose. She also fails to use all five lines available in the response box to write a well-formed paragraph. Instead, the two sentences she does write show a disregard for proper spelling (e.g., “chilli,” “make’s”) and punctuation (e.g., the word at the beginning of her first sentence lacks a capital letter and her second sentence lacks a period). According to the EQAO Rubric Descriptor for this question, Serena’s response scores a Level I (irrelevant content). Her response neglects to answer the assigned question; instead, the information she provides is off topic (e.g., “chilli [sic] is good for you”). While Serena makes a text-to-self connection with the menu content, and knowledge gained in class and at home about the beneficial effects of good nutrition on the body, this connection is not relevant to the question posed.

### 5.3.2 “I Have a Dream”

During February, as a part of Black History Month, students in Canada acknowledge and celebrate people who have made a lasting difference in the fight for equality. We also recognize some of the important events that contributed to the collapse of segregation in North America. As part of a study of influential and inspiring Black citizens who have made a difference in society, I read the picture book *Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, by Doreen Rappaport, to the class. This picture-book biography provides an introduction to one of the world’s most prominent leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the struggles he faced growing up in Atlanta, Georgia during the 1930s and 1940s. Weaving the immortal words of Dr. King, including his seminal “I Have a Dream” speech into a captivating narrative, Rappaport tells readers the story of Dr. King’s life and his dream to change America, and the world, through the Civil Rights Movement.

As with all sketch-to-stretch activities conducted in class, Serena, along with her classmates, was given 60 minutes and a wide-range of materials (e.g., crayons, markers, pencil crayons, and pastels) to create a sketch-to-stretch response to the story *Martin’s Big Words* (see Figure 13). It should be noted that there exists a minor difference between the sketch-to-stretch template used for “I Have a Dream” and the one used for *The Rough-Face Girl*. Experimenting slightly with the template, I included titles and a black line separating the “Sketch” component from the “Stretch” component to give students a spatial sense of how to organize their ideas. This discrepancy also appears in the Sketch-to-Stretch: “EQAO” (see Section 5.5.2).

# Sketch-to-Stretch: I Have a Dream

Sketch

Love  
♥



→ Martin Luther King made a big speech in 1963. Stretch

- He was inclusive.
- He was nice.
- He showed respect.
- He made peace.
- He tried to settle the world.

**Figure 5.3.2: Sketch-to-Stretch: "I Have a Dream"**  
(Serena, February 2013)

For my analysis of Serena's sketch-to-stretch, I begin by examining her sketch of the word "Love." Represented twice in her work, the sentiment of love has a powerful place of privilege in her work, appearing as the word, written in red marker, and again as the universally recognized symbol of the red heart. It is no coincidence that Serena depicts this powerful emotion using the colour red, as red, like the colour pink, is most commonly associated with blood and happiness, love and passion. The word love also features prominently in her sketch where, with the use of a red marker to thicken its letters, it stands in stark contrast to the white paper. Serena further underscores its importance by taking pains to capitalize the word (steps not taken during her written response to "My Café Menu"). Her sketch, while not as detailed as the one she created for *The Rough-Face Girl*, includes two other images: the first is of Dr. King, the second is of a gun surrounded by the prohibition sign, the universal symbol for no. Working in conjunction, the two images reinforce Dr. King's belief that change can occur through non-violent protest; a message that runs throughout *Martin's Big Words*. The drawing of

Martin Luther King Jr. includes two speech bubbles coming from his mouth. Although somewhat difficult to read, the speech bubbles state “We need peace;” clearly a statement Serena strongly believes in, as she has written it twice. Using the image of the prohibited gun serves to reinforce Serena’s belief that the main idea *Martin’s Big Words* is one of peace.

Although, she uses bullet points to organize her ideas, instead of a conventional paragraph, Serena writes six distinct sentences about *Martin’s Big Words*. Serena makes reference to Dr. King’s character (e.g., he is inclusive, nice, and respectful) and the Civil Rights Movement to end segregation. She also makes text-to-self and text-to-world connections. As part of our school’s curriculum, students participate in character education classes that stress the importance of good behavior and making good decisions as members of society. During his lifetime, Dr. King was seen as a role model for people, young and old. He demonstrated several good character traits, such as cooperation, inclusiveness and respect through his beliefs, words, and deeds. Forging a connection between the story and her prior experiences with these traits, Serena writes in the “Stretch” section of her sketch-to-stretch: “He was inclusive. He was nice. He showed respect.” It should be noted that in each case, Serena takes care to use proper punctuation, including capitals and periods, in her sentences. In reference to the steps Dr. King took in forwarding the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (e.g., organizing political marches, protests, and boycotts), Serena writes, “He tried to settel [sic] the world.” In other words, Dr. King used his influence to bring about an end to the civil unrest and inequality that was plaguing Black Americans. Through a combination of images and text, Serena includes examples from the story to support her ideas. For

instance, Serena knew from other texts read and heard in class that Dr. King made his inspirational “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963.

According to the rubric the teacher-derived rubric, Serena’s sketch-to-stretch, “I Have a Dream” scores a Level 3. Serena’s answer “indicates a basic understanding of the text’s main idea [and] provides some accurate and relevant support (e.g., the main idea in *Martin’s Big Words* is to spread the message of peace, love, respect, and inclusiveness through non-violent means). The response requires the reader to make some connections between the reason and what it is intended to prove (as Serena does not explicitly connect her ideas to direct quotes from the text). [The] student connects the text to her personal experiences with some accurate and relevant support (e.g., Martin Luther King’s embodiment of good character traits) ... and information learned from other familiar texts with some accurate and relevant support (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech was delivered in 1963). [She] connects the text to her ideas of the world with some accurate and relevant support” (e.g., through the use of political protest and peaceful marches, Dr. King tried to end segregation).

Although the picture book *Martin’s Big Words* is a much longer and more complex text than the café menu seen in Figure 11, Serena demonstrates a solid grasp of its main idea. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of her demonstrated understanding of the EQAO test question. While she scores a Level 3 for her response to *Martin’s Big Words*, her written response for the “My Café Menu” fails to earn a score beyond an “I” (irrelevant). Once again, at least according to the *EQAO Assessment Guide*, Serena is achieving below the provincial academic standards in school.

## 5.4 *Comparison # 3: “Earth Day” and “Tomorrow”*

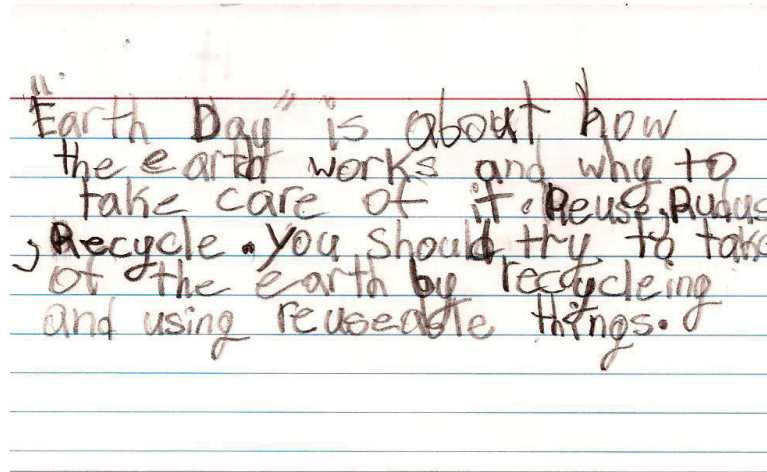
### 5.4.1 *“Earth Day”*

In the month of April, as part of our classroom activities surrounding International Earth Day, April 22, 2013, students read an adaptation of Jane Yolen’s poem “Earth Day” (see Appendix H). During 40 minutes of instructional class time, students were asked to answer a series of follow-up questions on text features and vocabulary (e.g., identify the poet and the number of lines and stanzas in the poem) as well as the poet’s main idea. Although it did not originate in an EQAO Student Language Booklet, effort was taken to ensure the poem reflected the length, content, and questions favoured by EQAO for poetry selections. The students’ paragraphs on main idea were assessed and scored using the Teacher-Derived Rubric (see Table 5.1.2). Students were asked to state the poem’s main idea and use examples from the text and their own ideas to support their answer.

“Earth Day” consists of three stanzas and 24 lines. The poet uses a metaphor (“I am the Earth/ And the Earth is me” lines 1-2) throughout the poem, drawing comparisons between features of the earth (e.g., grass, tree limbs, sticks, mud) and features found in the human body (e.g., hair, arms, legs, bones, muscle) (Yolen, 1995, lines 3-9). The poem has two underlying messages. First, humans are a part of the natural world, connected to the Earth and all things on it. Second, the poet believes that the Earth and the human body share symbolic similarities. Just as we must care for our bodies to live a fit and healthy life, so to must we respect and care for the Earth, as it too needs all of its natural features to survive. “And just as I/ Need every bit/ Of me to make/ My body fit/

So Earth needs/ Grass and stone and tree/ And things that grow here/ Naturally”) (lines 9-16).

The following is Serena’s written response to the poem “Earth Day.”



**Figure 5.4.1: Written Response Prompt #3: "Earth Day"**  
(Serena, April 25, 2013)

At first glance, it is quickly apparent that Serena’s written response is much longer than past attempts. In fact, it contains three complete sentences with proper punctuation, including capitals, periods, and quotation marks. Perhaps her personal interest in the environment and environmentally-friendly activities (Serena once attended an “Eco-Kids” camp) influenced her level of engagement. Drawing upon prior experiences with recycling waste both at home and at school, Serena references the fact that reducing, reusing, and recycling used products can help the Earth. However, her answer neglects to fully identify the main idea in “Earth Day.” According to the Teacher-Derived Rubric (Table 5.1.2), her response “indicates a partial understanding of the text’s main idea” as she identifies that the poem is about “how the earth works.” Unfortunately, she fails to explain this idea further and makes no connection between how the Earth works and the workings of the human body. While she goes on to identify

the need to care for the Earth as important, her support is limited and the reader must “connect the reason to what it is intended to prove.” (Ibid.). Serena demonstrates her understanding best when she uses her own experiences with recycling to support her own ideas. These ideas are attributed to Serena because recycling is neither explicitly, nor implicitly, mentioned in the poem. Unfortunately, she fails to use examples from the text to support her ideas or make a connection between the poet’s use of metaphor and the main idea. As a result, Serena’s written response scores a Level 2.

#### 5.4.2 “*Tomorrow*”

Near the end of December, students in my class read Peter Blue Cloud’s Aboriginal poem “Tomorrow” (see Appendix I). Similar to our undertaking with the poem “Earth Day,” students were asked to answer a series of follow-up questions on the poem’s content, features, and vocabulary. They were also invited to create a sketch-to-stretch demonstrating their understanding of the poem’s main idea. As with past sketch-to-stretch exercises, students were able to make use of a wide range of available drawing materials. They also had 60 minutes in which to complete their sketch-to-stretches.

“Tomorrow,” an Aboriginal poem consisting of 16 lines and 5 stanzas, deals with the topic of civil unrest and violence. The overall message, however, is one of hope and the promise for a kinder, gentler future. The poet appeals to people to put down the “lance of hate” (the anger and darkness resting in the human heart), dry their tears, and choose to celebrate the beauty in life (Blue Cloud, lines 4-7). According to the poet, tomorrow holds the promise of a new day. It is through hope and deed (social agency)

that we have the power to change the world and make it a better place for future generations.

In my analysis of Serena's sketch-to-stretch: "Tomorrow" (Figure 15), I begin with her drawing. Through a complex system of signs, Serena uses a combination of images and text to represent the poem's main ideas of violence, hope, and peace. On the left-hand side, Serena draws a brightly-coloured image of a sun, referencing the poem's lines "Tomorrow dances behind the sun/ in sacred promise/ of things to come for children/ not yet born" (Blue Cloud, lines 8-11). She includes a large image of a black lance, a violent weapon that appears in the poem. Inferring that "the lance of hate" (Blue Cloud, line 4) has been used to injure and kill in the name of distrust and hate, Serena includes at the tip of the lance a crude drawing of a face, its expression pained, its mouth etched in a frown.



*Figure 5.4.2: Sketch-to-stretch: "Tomorrow"  
(Serena, December 20, 2012)*

Central to her sketch are images of a horse with two hands in the process of clasping. The image of the horse may be representative of a method of travel (the warrior rides his horse into battle) or an object of contention (the two men fighting over the horse). The word “Together” is written above with care: if we get along together, there is no need to fight over the horse or ride into battle. Serena gives the word “Together” a place of privilege at the top-centre of the page. She visually emphasizes its importance by using a colour pattern to capture the reader’s eye. The use of the word “Together,” perhaps reflective of her time learning about the importance of inclusiveness in school; indicates a belief that, through acceptance, respect, and cooperation, we can find a way to achieve the “lasting beauty” that Peter Blue Cloud writes of in line 13. In fact, Serena references this line directly from the text, when she writes “For ours is the potential of truly/ lasting beauty” (lines 16-17). She highlights the importance of the word beauty by not only writing the word in a different colour of pastel, but by also drawing a box around it. However, as the two hands remain unclasped, perhaps Serena believes the goal exists just beyond our reach. Beside the quoted text resides the image of a person, whose face, in clear contrast to the word “beauty,” expresses discontent. Interestingly, Serena has not explained the presence of this image in her drawing. I can only assume that it represents the poet Peter Blue Cloud or the speaker in the text. Lastly, Serena draws soil along the bottom of her sketch-to-stretch in reference to the poem’s final stanza: “Now let us lay the lance of hate/ upon this soil” (lines 15-16).

According to the Teacher-Derived Rubric (Table 5.1.2), Serena’s sketch-to-stretch response indicates a well-developed understanding of the text’s main idea. Going from left-to-right, the images Serena has created can be read as a clear and concisely

sequenced message. First, there is violence and suffering, but then, through acts of acceptance, inclusiveness, and togetherness, we begin to pave the way toward achieving truly lasting beauty and peace. Serena’s answer demonstrates several instances of specific and relevant support through her use of images and direct quotations from the text. With the exceptions of the central image of the horse and the figure with the inexplicable facial expression, her response does not require the reader to infer her intentions. She also clearly connects the text with her own personal experiences and ideas (e.g., the concept of togetherness) and uses specific and relevant support from the text (e.g., direct quotations). Serena’s sketch-to-stretch: “Tomorrow” scores a Level 4.

## **5.5 Comparison # 4: “Earth Day” and “EQAO”**

### **5.5.1 Comparison #4: “Earth Day”**

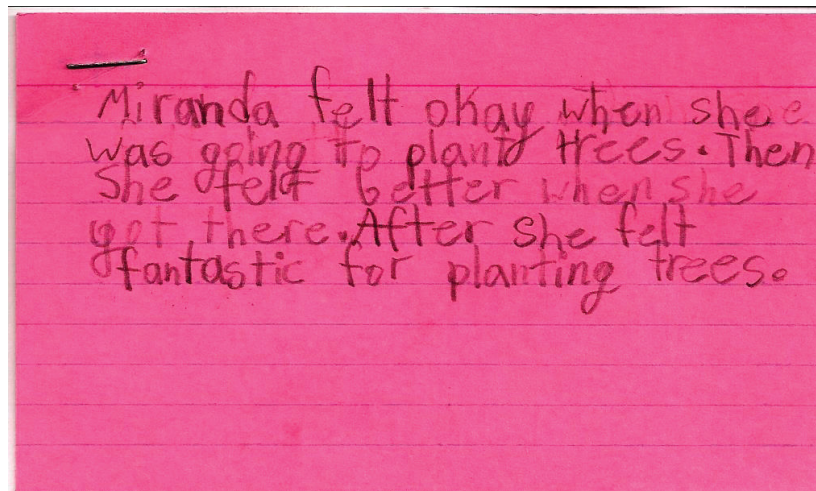
As part of the Earth Day activities previously mentioned in Section 5.4, students were asked to independently read a selection of text called “Earth Day” by Kelly Hashway. Although it shares a name with Writing Prompt #3, Hashway’s “Earth Day” is a short narrative. Students were asked to answer four content questions, followed by a short-answer question on the text’s main idea. It should be noted that this text, while similar to those found in an EQAO Language Booklet, did not come from an EQAO test.

“Earth Day” begins with a beautiful Sunday afternoon. The main character Miranda is looking forward to riding her bike with her best friend Meredith in the park. When she calls on Meredith, she learns that Meredith, along with her brother, has volunteered to plant trees at a local seniors’ centre as part of an Earth Day celebration. Although she is frustrated that her plan for a bike ride has fallen through, Miranda

nevertheless agrees to accompany Meredith and her brother to the tree planting event. Upon arriving, Miranda is surprised to see the large turnout of people for the tree planting. Realizing that if people persist in neglecting the Earth, there will not be any parks for children like her to play in, Miranda becomes keen to help out. In the story, Miranda spends the rest of the day learning the importance of planting trees, recycling, and picking up litter. Although exhausted from their hard work, Miranda and Meredith decide to end their day with a bike ride. After remarking on her new appreciation for the environment and the park in particular, she and Meredith make plans to clean up other areas in the town.

Using standard paragraph format, students in my class were asked to write a response to the question: *Explain how Miranda’s feelings about Earth Day changed in the story. Use examples from the text and your own ideas to support your answer.*

Below is Serena’s response (Figure 16).



**Figure 1.5.1: Written Response Prompt #4: “Earth Day” (Short Narrative) (Serena, April 24, 2013)**

Serena’s response consists of three complete sentences, including proper punctuation (capitals and periods) and the use of sequential transition words (e.g., then,

after). However, the sentence content itself is simple and requires the reader to infer the writer's intentions. Since Serena fails to use a topic sentence, it is difficult to discern the context of her answer. For example, in her second sentence, Serena's writes: "Then she felt better when she got there." The reader cannot help but ask, where is "there"? While Serena attributes three different emotions to Miranda (okay, better, fantastic) they are incorrect. At the beginning of the story, Miranda "couldn't wait" to spend the day in the park riding her bike with her friend Meredith, however, when she later learned that Meredith already had plans to help plant trees, her "face fell" (Hashway). In the middle of the story, she was "surprised" to see a large crowd of people turned out to support the tree planting (Ibid.). When she realized the positive impact helping the environment could have on the park, Miranda was suddenly "eager to pitch in" (Ibid.). By the day's end, Miranda "was exhausted but really happy with herself" and excited about all the places around town she could help clean up (Ibid.). It is Serena's final sentence, "She felt fantastic for planting trees." that shows the most accuracy. As part of her sentence, Serena also uses an example, albeit limited and vague, from the text to support her answer (e.g., planting trees).

When assessing Serena's work with the Teacher-Derived Rubric (Table 5.1.2), Serena's response is between a Level 1 and Level 2. Her answer indicates a partial understanding of the text's main idea (Level 2). However, the support she uses from the text is limited and vague (Level 2). In some cases, it is inaccurate (e.g., Miranda does not feel "okay" when she decided to join Meredith and her brother in planting trees). Although Serena knows a lot about environmentally-friendly activities, such as recycling (as seen in her response to the poem "Earth Day"), she makes no attempt to connect the

text to her personal experiences, information learned from other texts, or her ideas about the world (Level 1). As a result, Serena's response achieves a score of Level 1.5.

### 5.5.2 "EQAO"

One day after the students in my class had completed the EQAO Language and Mathematics test, we engaged in a class debrief of the experience. One of the activities the students participated in was creating a sketch-to-stretch. However, unlike past sketch-to-stretch exercises, students were not asked to demonstrate their understanding of the main idea. Instead, they were invited to describe the feelings the EQAO testing experience elicited. As the prompt was open-ended and up to each student's discretion, the results took a variety of creative forms.

When creating their sketch-to-stretches on their feelings about the EQAO test, students were encouraged to follow the basic format of using evidence from the experience (writing the test) and their own ideas to support their sketch. Below is Serena's Sketch-to-Stretch: "EQAO."

# Sketch-to-Stretch: EQAO



Figure 5.5.2: Sketch-to-Stretch: "EQAO"  
(Serena, May 31, 2013)

Although Serena writes only one sentence in the “Stretch” section of the space, “I did not like when we did not get to do any subjects, except on thursday [sic],” she employs quite a bit of labelling on the “Sketch” side. Serena writes that she was unhappy during the week of the EQAO test because our traditional instructional day was circumvented. As a result, most rotary classes, such as computer class and library, were rescheduled until Thursday, the day after the test’s completion. Serena’s sketch of her desk on test day is very complex and includes a multitude of colours and detailed images. She has invested a great deal of effort to ensure the sketch is life-like (all illustrations are correctly coloured) and labelled for the reader. In the bottom right-hand corner are images of the “supplies,” a yellow highlighter, pencil, and pink pearl eraser, she was given to write the test with. In the space above is an orange square, representative of the orange-coloured privacy folders students put around their work during the test. Along the left-hand side are three images of the EQAO test Student Booklets: Language 1,

Mathematics, Language 2, respectively. In fact, Serena accurately orders the booklets (top to bottom) from the first booklet completed on Monday, to the second booklet completed on Tuesday, to the third, and final, booklet completed on Wednesday. Labelled as “bar,” Serena also includes two pictures of chocolate-chip granola bars, representative of the two granola bars students received each day as an external incentive and reward for maintaining focus during the testing process. She describes her reaction to receiving the treats as “Yum.” Serena also includes the smiley face, symbolizing her feelings of happiness at receiving the delicious treats during the test. Overall, Serena’s sketch-to-stretch distills her EQAO test experience to two powerful and opposing feelings: happiness and unhappiness.

According to the Teacher-Derived Rubric (Table 5.1.2), Serena’s sketch-to-stretch, “indicates a basic understanding of the text’s main idea” (demonstrate your feelings about the EQAO test). Serena’s answer provides some accurate and relevant support (her text regarding the loss of rotary subjects and the addition of the granola bar treats). However, as Serena does not explicitly draw a connection between the granola bars and the “Yum” sentiment at the top of her page, the reader must make the “connections between the reason, and what it is intended to prove.” (Ibid.). With some support (the inclusion of the test folder, test booklets, and school supplies) Serena connects the EQAO test to her personal experience of writing it. To further support her response, Serena should have included evidence from the text (perhaps referencing a particular question she found interesting or struggled with). Serena earns a Level 3 for her Sketch-to-Stretch: “EQAO.”

### 5.6 *An Anomaly: “The Ice Cream Taster”*

In the course of our review for the upcoming EQAO test, Serena consistently scored somewhere between Level I (Incomplete/Irrelevant) and Level 2 on her written responses. There was, however, one exception. On May 21, 2013, students were asked to read the poetry selection “The Ice Cream Taster,” from the *EQAO Student Booklet: Language 2*, Spring, 2009. Serena’s written response to this question scored a Level 3. For this reason, I decided to include her response in my data analysis. I was curious as to why Serena performed better on this task than any other. What was it about the question that made her response detailed and relevant? According to the *EQAO Score Guide*, this is the one time Serena achieves the provincial standard for reading comprehension.

The text appearing in the Reading section of the Language Booklet, is a two-page poem, consisting of eight stanzas and 32 lines. The speaker of the poem, whose name and gender is left unknown (perhaps for the reader to better identify with) is asked, along with classmates Jasmine and Wade, what he/she wants to be when he/she grows up. The teacher, Mrs. Smith, invites students to write about their dreams for the future. Jasmine writes that she wants to play soccer all day in the sun, as “What job could be more fun?” (line 12). Wade writes that he wishes to be an adventurer, exploring “Jungles, mountains, and much more/ To places hot and places cold/ His fingers crossed that he finds gold” (lines 14-16). Initially, the speaker of the poem is unsure of his/her future, “What if I have nothing planned?” (line 18), he/she states. To which the teacher replies: “A pilot, a teacher or maybe an actor?/ A singer, a dancer or driver of a tractor?/ Whatever it is you choose to do,/ Make sure it reflects only you” (lines 21-24). After much consideration,

the speaker arrives at his/her ideal job: "An ice cream taster I will be,/ The best job, I guarantee" (lines 29-30).

As with past EQAO written prompts, Serena was given 40 minutes, along with her classmates, to independently read the text and answer a series of four multiple-choice questions focused on content and vocabulary, and two short-answer content questions. Since "The Ice Cream Taster," appears in the Reading section of the EQAO Language Booklet, I was unable to provide assistance with reading the text or questions. Students were also given limited supplies: a pencil, eraser, ruler, and highlighter, with which to work. Below is Serena's answer to *Question 21: Explain whether or not you would answer the questions in lines 5-6 the same way that Wade does. Use details from the text and your own ideas to support your answer.*

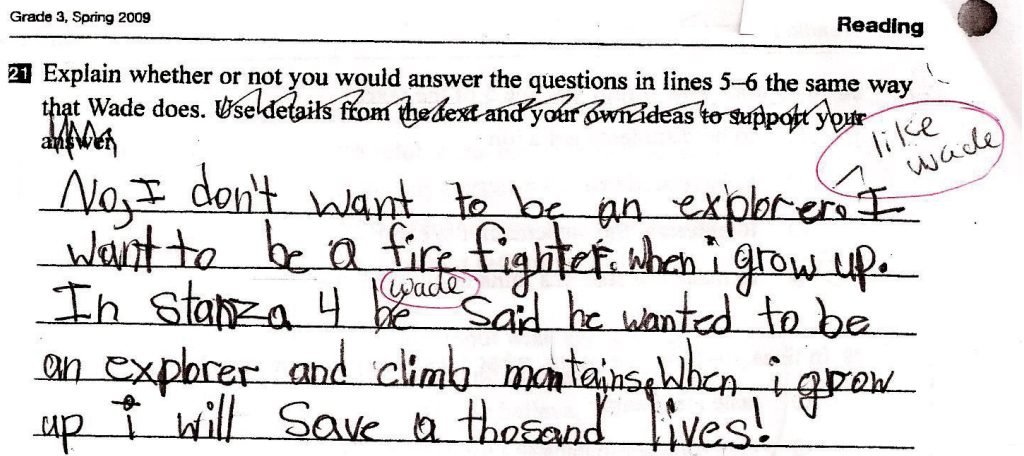


Figure 5.6: EQAO Written Prompt #5: "The Ice Cream Taster" (Serena, May 21, 2013)

Before beginning with the analysis of Serena's written reader-response, it should be noted that I annotated aspects of her response in an effort to clarify her meaning when assessing it. To distinguish my annotations from Serena's original answer, I have marked them in red. As with many questions on the EQAO test, Question 21 is more complex

than it appears at first glance, and requires some disassembly on the part of the reader. First, the reader has to locate lines 5-6 in the poem (“When you grow up, what will you be?/ What is your future? What do you see?”) (“The Ice Cream Taster,” 2009). Then, he must find Wade’s response to the questions asked (stanza four). Finally, the reader must write his response on whether he agrees or disagrees with Wade’s answer (see above).

Serena’s response consists of four complete sentences, and with some success, proper punctuation (e.g., she fails to consistently capitalize the pronoun “I”). This is the only instance in which Serena takes advantage of all five lines of writing space available. Serena begins her paragraph with a topic sentence, albeit vague, “No, I do not want to be an explorer,” in reference to the question of whether she agrees with Wade’s reply to be an explorer when she grows up. Serena further explains her reasoning by stating she wants to be a firefighter when she grows up. Using specific examples from the text to support her answer, Serena restates that she does not want to be an explorer and climb mountains (stanza four); rather, she wishes to save lives. Through the use of an exclamation mark in her writing, she demonstrates an emotional connection (excitement) to the idea of being a firefighter when she is older.

According to the *EQAO Scoring Guide Descriptor for Reading Open-Response Poem (The Ice Cream Taster) Question 21*, Serena’s response “Indicates an understanding of whether or not the reader would answer the question in lines 5-6 the same way that Wade does. [Her] response includes some accurate and relevant support. [However, her] response requires the reader to make some connections between the reason and what it is intended to prove.” (Spring 2009). Using the exemplars provide by EQAO and the *Descriptor Guide*, Serena’s reader-response scores a Level 3. Out of the

eight written response practice prompts the class engaged in during the two month period leading up to the EQAO test, this is the only instance in which Serena scores above a Level 2. Unlike with past written responses, Serena makes a solid effort to answer this question. She uses evidence from the text to support her response (e.g., “he said he wanted to be an explorer and climb mountains.”) and makes a personal connection with the text, as her older brother is currently training to be a firefighter. It may be the personal connection she draws between her brother, the text, and her own dreams that increase her interest and engagement (see Chapter Six for details). Unfortunately, Serena’s vague use of the pronoun “he,” as opposed to the character’s name in her response, forces the reader to infer that she is referring to the character of Wade in the poem; thus, preventing her from scoring a Level 4.

### **5.7 Summary**

This chapter presented a comparative analysis between the five traditional written responses, and the four sketch-to-stretch activities Serena produced during the 2012-2013 school year. The comparison was conducted using rubrics provided by the EQAO organization (see respective scoring guides) and the teacher-derived rubric depicted in Chapter 5. Tables 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 provide a compilation of Serena’s scores to each invitation as well as an average level of achievement.

**Table 5.7.1: Scores for Serena’s Written Responses**  
**Serena’s Achievement on Written Responses**

Title	Form	Score
<i>The Nest</i>	Short Narrative	Level 1
<i>My Café Menu</i>	Graphic Text	Level 1 (Irrelevant)
<i>Earth Day</i>	Poem	Level 2
<i>Earth Day</i>	Short Narrative	Level 1.5
<i>The Ice Cream Taster</i>	Poem	Level 3
<b>Average Score = Level 1.5</b>		

**Table 5.7.2: Scores for Serena’s Sketch-to-Stretches**  
**Serena’s Achievement on Sketch-to-Stretch Tasks**

Title	Form	Score
<i>The Rough-Face Girl</i>	Narrative	Level 3
<i>Martin’s Big Words</i>	Narrative	Level 3
<i>Tomorrow</i>	Poem	Level 4
<i>EQAO</i>	Mixed	Level 3
<b>Average Score = Level 3.25</b>		

As depicted in the table above, the average level Serena achieved in text comprehension according to her sketch-to-stretches was slightly above the province’s standard of achievement (Level 3). Moreover, this score was also slightly double the level she received on her written reader-responses. The next chapter presents a thematic analysis of the trends in the data.

## **Chapter Six: Themes and Trends in the Data**

### **6.1 *Introduction***

During the process of comparing the data displayed in each artifact, a series of common elements appeared. Using the file folder method, I photocopied Serena's work, and annotated and coded aspects of the raw data according to the tentative themes and categories I perceived (Merriam, 1998, p. 186). These coded sections were then cut up and placed into corresponding file folders labelled by category/theme. Following Sharan Merriam's suggestions for categorizing data, I ensured that the categories I used were relevant to the collected data and mutually exclusive (i.e., a piece of data could only fit in one category) (1998, p. 184). In order to communicate my results with ease, I decided to limit the number of categories to three: presentation and audience; ideas and meaning making (text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world); and voice. Chapter Six outlines the themes and reoccurring patterns that appear in Serena's written responses and sketch-to-stretches and how these themes, in turn, were used to answer my research question. Please note that the terms 'themes' and 'categories' have been used synonymously.

### **6.2 *Themes and Trends in the Data***

After each written response and sketch-to-stretch was analyzed (see Chapter Five), I began the difficult and critical task of looking for the bigger picture and examining my findings for common features.

Thematic analysis, often preferred by the novice teacher researcher, involves repetitive, ongoing review of accumulated information in order to identify recurrent patterns, themes, or categories. Through this strategy, each new piece of information is examined in light of a particular research question in order to construct a tentative answer to the question. Tentative answers are categorized into themes. This process continues until themes emerge that are well supported by all available information. (Hancock, 2006, p. 61)

As with Merriam, Hancock outlines several criteria to ensure a researcher's themes accurately and comprehensively represent the information collected in the study. First, themes must reflect the purpose of the research and respond to the researcher's question(s). Second, the themes will only appear once the researcher has exhausted all of the information gathered in the study that is relevant to the research question. Third, each theme should represent separate and distinct categories of findings. Fourth, each theme should be as specific and explanatory as possible for the reader. Finally, themes should be of comparable complexity (Hancock, 2006, pp. 61-62).

### *6.2.1 Theme 1: Presentation and Audience*

According to Culham, presentation represents more than how a piece of writing looks to the reader (2003, p. 247). How a writer chooses to present her ideas on paper can either invite or inhibit the reader. If a written reader-response fails to be inviting, the reader may have difficulty determining not only the writer's intentions, but how much she understood of the text. Among the most important traits of a well-written piece is the author's use of well-formed sentences, white space, and the "effective integration [and clear alignment] of text and illustrations, charts, graphs, maps, and tables." (Culham, 2003, p. 248).

Connected to presentation is the notion of audience. Regie Routman believes that writing for a real audience, not just the teacher, is one of the most effective ways to get quality writing from students (2005, p. 145). In other words, when students are writing for the sole purpose of a test, they are not thinking about the reader, nor are they invested or engaged in the task. It goes without saying then, that the more authentic and engaging the material or task, the more likely students are going to concern themselves with how they are presenting their ideas.

When examining Serena's written reader-responses and sketch-to-stretches, it is apparent that she spent minimal time invested in the former activity. Making use of only half the amount of the space provided, Serena wrote between one and three sentences in her written reader-responses. It is only in the anomalous response to the poem "The Ice-Cream Taster" that Serena attempted to engage her reader and accurately show her understanding through the use of fluency and word variation. Conversely, as noted in the data analysis section in Chapter Five, Serena spent quite a bit of time considering her position and word choice in each of her sketch-to-stretches. In both her "I Have a Dream" sketch-to-stretch and her "Sketch-to-Stretch: *The Rough-Face Girl*," Serena wrote six complete and complex sentences. In the case of her sketch-to-stretch responses to her EQAO experience and the Aboriginal poem "Tomorrow," Serena wrote the equivalent of one short or fragmented sentence, respectively, along with labels to convey her comprehension to the reader.

In the end however, it was her detailed use of colour, stylized font, spacing and imagery which played the greatest role in conveying the depth of her understanding to her audience. For example, the presentation of the prohibition symbol over the drawn image

of a gun easily and effectively conveyed Serena's belief that violence is wrong and should be stopped, in her "Sketch-to-Stretch: I Have a Dream." Whereas the image of the two hands in near clasp alongside the highlighted word "together" demonstrated her ideas and understanding about acceptance, friendship and peace, in response to the poem "Tomorrow." Her complex use of pictures, labels and symbols in the sketch-to-stretch response to *The Rough-Face Girl* perhaps best demonstrated Serena's multimodal navigation of difficult concepts, as she depicted her comprehension of, and connection to bullying, self-esteem, inclusiveness and love, amongst others. And with only the simple pictures of a chocolate chip granola bar, an arrow directed to the word "bar," and the word "yum" accompanied by the smiley face symbol, Serena was able to demonstrate her understanding of both the task (How did you feel about the EQAO test?) and her feelings on the subject to her audience. In this instance, her picture is worth a thousand words. The granola bar treats were the best part of the experience!

If Routman is correct, perhaps it is the lack of authentic audience that fuels Serena's reluctance to demonstrate her reading comprehension with traditional reader-response. If this is true, then the opposite can be said for sketch-to-stretch activities, which by their very nature invite deep collaboration and discussion between classmates. When creating her sketch-to-stretches in class, Serena was clear about her purpose and aware that her friends and peers were her audience. As a result, she took great care to choose her words and layout carefully, and to accurately convey her understanding of the texts to the reader.

### 6.2.2 *Theme 2: Ideas & Meaning Making (Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, Text-to-World)*

Culham also includes “ideas” among her *6+1 Traits of Writing*. She writes that “ideas make up the content of the piece. When the ideas are strong, the overall message is clear, not garbled.” (2003, p. 35). Culham believes that students, and our reluctant writers, in particular, often struggle with writing down their ideas because the process can be too complex and overwhelming for them (2003, p. 36). Even if they have amazing and vivid ideas in their heads, students will often resort to writing simple, generic sentences because it is the easier and faster route to take (Ibid.). When this happens, students transform from “writers” to “finishers” (Culham, 2003, p. 37). When teachers ask their students to respond to a text using written reader-responses, they are assessing their students’ comprehension according to how well the students identify important ideas in the text, and connect them to their own personal experiences and knowledge (e.g., text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world). The stronger the ideas and connections the student includes in her writing, the stronger the teacher believes the student’s level of comprehension to be. However, as noted above, if there is no authentic audience for a piece of writing, the presentation of ideas can suffer because of the author’s low level of interest and engagement. This is especially true if the author is already reluctant to write.

In all four of the written reader-responses that were compared to sketch-to-stretches, Serena struggled with conveying her ideas and making meaning. The ideas she wrote about were not only obvious and simplistic, they lacked clarity and accurate detail. In each case, the reader had to infer Serena’s meaning in order to connect Serena’s ideas to the text (e.g., in “The Nest” the reader was required to infer that “they” and “them” referred to the robins). In two examples, in particular (“The Café Menu” and “Earth

Day”) Serena’s writing lacked focus and quality, while the content was irrelevant to the questions posed. Moreover, the personal experience and knowledge she did draw upon and mention in her writing (e.g., “good food makes you strong” and “you should try to take care of the earth by recycling and using reusable things”) were, unfortunately, off-topic.

Serena had considerably more success in demonstrating her meaning making and ideas in her sketch-to-stretches. In all four cases, her ideas regarding the main message(s) of each text were relevant and properly substantiated with details from her own personal connections and prior experiences; (e.g., “You don’t have to be pretty. You have to believe in your heart that’s all.”); the text in question (e.g., “For ours is the potential of true lasting beauty.”) or other texts (e.g., “Martin Luther King Jr. made a big speech in 1963.”); or her experiences in the world (e.g., “He [Dr. King] tried to settle [sic] the world” through love and the desire for peace). In some sketch-to-stretches, she was able to demonstrate all three types of connections: text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world. Not once did I consider Serena’s message regarding her level of comprehension garbled.

### 6.2.3 *Theme 3: Voice*

“Voice is the single most important element in writing and holding a reader’s interest” (Routman, 2005, p. 146). For Routman, voice is the writer’s unique personality on paper, his own melody in words, and her “mark” as an individual; no two voices are alike (Ibid.). However, for students to write with voice, they first need to be interested in writing. What does this mean for our reluctant writers? Classroom writing tasks that

have rigid requirements and focus on formulaic writing can steal a student's voice because these activities lack real audiences and authentic, higher thinking questions. When students are focused on constructing paragraphs and sentences to meet specific formats or test parameters, they do not have the time or energy to work on including voice. They just want to finish and move on (Ibid.). Culham also includes voice as one of her 6+ *Traits of Writing*. She believes that including voice in a writing piece gives the reader a sense of the person behind the words, his ideas, insights and perspective (2003, p. 109). With the exception of Writing Prompt #5, the "Anomaly," Serena's written reader-responses offered little demonstration of her voice, and only the briefest glimpse of the girl behind the words.

When examining Serena's written reader-responses, Serena appeared to be what Calhoun calls an "indifferent writer," one who is uninvolved with the topic and/or distant from the reader (Ibid.). What writing Serena did accomplish was so brief that little was achieved beyond introducing the topic (e.g., "'Earth Day' is about how the earth works and why to take care of it.") (Ibid.). Moreover, what was said in response to the questions asked about the text was simplistic, flat, and unfortunately, rarely accurate or on-topic (e.g., "Miranda felt okay when she was going to plant trees."). Taken as they are, Serena's written reader-responses depict a student who is both a poor reader and a poor, unengaged writer. Serena fared much better with her sketch-to-stretches. Taken together, her sketch-to-stretches paint the picture of a very thoughtful and kind girl: a student who enjoys art and drawing, who has a sense of humour (as seen in the smiley face drawn beside the word "Yum"), who has an eye for detail and sequencing (as seen in placement of the EQAO test booklets or the imagery in her sketch-to-stretch on

“Tomorrow”), who feels deeply about the importance of a person’s inner beauty and good character, and who believes strongly in the ideals of love and peace, and the power of togetherness against forces of hate and violence. The above comparison depicts two very different portraits of Serena and her voice as a person, a reader, and a writer.

### **6.3 Summary**

As I conducted the thematic analysis on Serena’s written reader-responses and sketch-to-stretches, two contrasting images of Serena, the student, began to take form. It is clear that the restricted format of the written response prevented Serena from successfully demonstrating her comprehension of the texts read in class. The scores/levels she earned on these writing assessments painted a picture of a student in need of remedial assistance in reading. As Serena’s teacher, and someone who has known her since she was in kindergarten, I knew this was not the case. Serena was one of my best readers, and a student who, at the end of grade three, was reading nearly one grade ahead of her peers. When the data and what you know of a student conflict with each other, something needs to be re-examined. Either your data source is faulty or your perception of the student is wrong. In Serena’s case, it was the former. The written response tasks I was asking Serena to do were not the right type of assessment for her.

In Serena’s sketch-to-stretches, I see and hear the personality and voice of the student I have come to know over the years at Queenstown Public School. Sketch-to-stretch provides Serena with the forum she needs to accurately demonstrate her comprehension. It is a creative activity that engages Serena’s mind and artistic flair, which has an authentic purpose and audience to motivate her to do her best. Through the

use of sketch-to-stretch activities, Serena is able to demonstrate her meaning making, as well as the deeply personal connections she makes with a variety of rich texts. Using a complex sign system of words, detailed pictures, and universally-recognized symbols of her own careful devising, Serena has shown that she can make sense of abstract and sophisticated concepts, such as: love, hate, otherness, segregation, and inequity (concepts that were much more difficult than the ones present in the written response short-answer texts). Her sketch-to-stretches, and the scores/levels they received on the other hand, revealed a good likeness to the sensitive and thoughtful student I know.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

*“I think this is an amazing idea and would really benefit my daughter. I also give permission if you needed to take her photograph or use her name in your study because I feel this study is very important and validated.”  
(H.W, personal communication, June 19, 2013)*

### 7.1 *Introduction*

This thesis set out to examine the use of sketch-to-stretch as an alternative strategy for reluctant writers to demonstrate their understanding of texts. It did so by comparing the written reader-responses of a reluctant writer in my class, Serena, against her sketch-to-stretch responses to a range of texts. This chapter presents what I learned as a teacher researcher from engaging in the process of qualitative research in my classroom during the 2012-2013 school year. First, I will discuss what I learned about my student participant, Serena. This will be followed by a discussion of sketch-to-stretch as a strategy for reluctant writers. Finally, I will reflect upon the insights and new understandings I have gained from engaging in my qualitative case study, and how this new knowledge will impact my teaching practice in the future.

### 7.2 *Serena: A Reluctant Writer*

An avid reader who demonstrates a strong reluctance toward writing, Serena is not your typical student. Serena is a creative child who enjoys the artistic nature of pre-writing activities, but consistently balks when asked to transfer her ideas into traditional paragraphs. Unfortunately, the methods by which Serena and students like her best demonstrate their understanding, are the same methods most often overlooked by teachers. For reasons that she is not yet prepared to share, Serena is reluctant to share her thoughts, feelings, and experiences through writing. The words she does write, with their

lack of presentation, ideas and voice, tell us almost nothing about her as a reader making meaning or as an author. Yet, regardless of what her written reader-response scores seem to indicate, Serena is not a student who needs to work on learning gaps in reading. In fact, as her sketch-to-stretches show, given the right opportunities, Serena understands, synthesizes, and conveys the main ideas of different texts through very complex sign systems of her own creating. Like the grade seven students Whitin writes about in her book, *Sketching Stories, Stretching Minds*, through sketch-to-stretch, Serena confidently considers “theme, character relationships, mood, conflict, and conflict resolution [while also expressing her] feelings and the feelings of the characters in the story.” (1996, p. xviii).

### **7.3 *Sketch-to-Stretch as an Alternative Assessment***

As alluded to in Section 2.7, traditional assessment methods, such as the short-answer responses, do not always reflect the learning of our diverse students, their strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers need to have an array of alternative assessments at their disposal if they want to gather an accurate picture of their students’ learning during diagnostic, formative, and summative tasks. Sketch-to-stretch, the trans-mediation visual text strategy, is a perfect example of one such method of alternative assessment. As shown in the data gathered during this case study, the strategy is particularly effective with reluctant writers; however, teachers should not restrict themselves to using it with just reluctant writers. Due to its versatility, sketch-to-stretch can be used with students of all abilities, for a range of subjects and concepts, and during a variety of settings. While sketch-to-stretch invitations can be time consuming (our

invitations took approximately 60 minutes) and require a range of materials to work with, they provide a wealth of opportunities for deeper learning. Moreover, sketch-to-stretch encourages engaging and insightful class discussions in which children take ownership over their learning as they build upon their schema in a collaborative forum. Short answer questions or the like, as seen on standardized tests, such as EQAO, tend to appeal to only a small segment of the class: students who excel at traditional reading and writing activities. As a result, written reader-responses can be daunting and discouraging tasks for those students who struggle with decoding and comprehending long passages text (e.g., ELL students) or struggle with writing due to various factors (e.g., graphomotor issues, reluctance). You only have to look to Serena to see how debilitating written reader-response tasks can be to a student's performance.

### *7.3.1 Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey*

Near the end of my research, I conducted an attitude survey with my students on sketch-to-stretch in order to gain their feedback on the activity and inform my teaching practice for the next school year. I asked students to answer a series of six questions on how they felt toward writing and the sketch-to-stretch activities performed in class (see Appendix J). The results, while surprisingly mixed, provided deeper insight into my students' perceptions and priorities. While the vast majority of students wrote that sketch-to-stretch was a fun activity and that they enjoyed expressing their ideas and feelings through creative drawing, a few exceptions did exist. One student wrote that he found the task of drawing and writing complicated, and another student wrote that he did not like that sketch-to-stretch was rooted in drawing, a skill he lacked confidence in. One

male student in my class flippantly remarked that he liked sketch-to-stretch activities because they took up a lot of class time (typically 60 minutes) and usually led up to recess!

Overall, however, most students had only positive things to say about the visual text strategy. Two children remarked that sketch-to-stretch got their “brains thinking.” One child theorized that other students in the school may like sketch-to-stretch because it appeals to two kinds of children: those who enjoy drawing and those who enjoy writing. Others said that sketch-to-stretch was a creative and colourful activity, and that they liked describing and writing about what they had drawn to either myself or their peers. One female student said that she enjoyed sharing her sketch-to-stretch with her classmates, and found it exciting to see what others had drawn and written. To *Question 4: Why do you think people may like sketch-to-stretch?* Serena wrote: “because it lets them [people] show what they feel about the story.” (Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey, June 28, 2013). One of the most perceptive responses was MJ’s answer to *Question 5: Does sketch-to-stretch help you with learning new things?* He answered: “Yes, it does because if I do not understand the questions, I like to draw it out. I can also look at other people’s drawing [sic] to see how they understand [sic] the question and that helps me get it.” (Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey, June 28, 2013).

Unfortunately, the lingering student test-taking mentality that so often pervades our schools, also affected my students’ attitudes toward sketch-to-stretch. At the end of the case study, there were a few students who continued to be preoccupied with written reader-responses and tests. For these select few students, their answers to the Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey led me to believe that they saw sketch-to-stretch activities simply

as another means to an end: another weapon in their arsenal to help them prepare and study for writing a test or writing a better reader-response. For instance, to the above mentioned *Question 5: Does sketch-to-stretch help you with learning new things?* One-quarter of the students present for the survey referred to taking tests in their answers. These students stated that sketch-to-stretch was a worthwhile activity because it helped them learn new vocabulary, and gain a better understanding of new ideas. These students believed that this type of learning and review, in turn, helped them perform better on their schoolwork, homework, and written tests. As CS wrote, “Yes, it does help you with your thinking by practis [sic] what to do so when you do the test you know the ancens [sic].” (Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey, June 28, 2013). One could claim that written reader-responses and tests have been the standard for assessing comprehension for so long that, even students have difficulty recognizing legitimate and worthy alternatives.

#### **7.4 *Insights into the Present and Reflections on the Future***

According to Le Cren, when we use the word “creativity” in connection to our students’ work, it is more often than not, used in terms of isolated events such as narrative writing. Instead, the majority of the assigned reading and writing students do in school, is of an efferent (or factual, informative) nature. Students are rarely given time to aesthetically read during class time, and when we try to integrate aesthetic activities into our lesson plans, they fall short. This is either because they are actually efferent in nature (e.g., Analyze why the author chose the colour blue for that picture or draw a map of the setting) or because they are simply a shallow misuse of time and effort (e.g., Take 10 minutes to read the passage and then an additional 30 minutes to design a poster for it).

Students are asked to read for information on a daily basis, and write responses to texts that include thoughts on main idea and supporting details. On a weekly basis I hear myself saying to my students, *Okay everyone, I would like you to write a paragraph with six to eight sentences about the text's main idea. Do not forget to include a topic sentence, a closing sentence, and evidence or examples from the text to support your ideas.* By assigning such tasks, I am immediately forcing my students to assume an efferent stance toward reading and writing. In doing so, I am unintentionally stifling their comprehension and creativity. Not only am I dictating and limiting the type of experiences they have when they are reading, I am also influencing the depth of meaning they are able to make from it, and how they demonstrate this understanding.

In contrast to reading for information, the students who take an aesthetic stance are “using imagining, visualizing characters and settings, making connections to past experiences ...” (Le Cren, 1997, p. 20). By reading primarily for pleasure and experience, students are able to savor the feelings, images, sounds, smells and actions they associate with the text. In doing so, they are able to facilitate deeper connections with the material. These connections not only serve to enhance their understanding, but as brain research has shown, also improves their retention of events and information. Interestingly, Le Cren writes that students who choose to read for pleasure often have higher creativity scores than those who dislike reading for pleasure (1997, p. 20). If this is true, it is not surprising then that Serena performs best when demonstrating her understanding of a text/concept through creative sketch-to-stretch activities. After all, when answering the ERAS section on her feelings toward reading for pleasure, Serena indicated that she felt “happy” to “very happy” in eight of the 10 questions. It is also

telling that she answered *Question 12: How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?* and *Question 20: How do you feel about taking a reading test?* in the ERAS, by circling the “very upset” response.

One way to engage students in writing tasks and maintain their interest is to offer choice. When I decided to undertake teacher research, my aim was to discover if sketch-to-stretch was an effective alternative assessment of reading comprehension for reluctant writers. Throughout this year-long process of discovery and learning, I also gained a greater understanding of my own teaching practices. The knowledge I have accumulated during this past school year has impacted not only my teaching practice, but my perception of traditional forms of assessment, including high-stakes standardized testing. While I may not agree with the EQAO test or its ilk, at least for the present it is an inescapable reality for Ontario parents, teachers, and students. And, if students are to achieve success on the test, they need to be taught the tricks and tools needed to demonstrate their understanding in terms that EQAO understands: the short and long answer reader-response questions. After all, “students who write better get better reading comprehension and vocabulary scores.” (Routman, 2005, p. 126). However, as we know, these scores do not necessarily depict an accurate picture of our students and their abilities, knowledge and skills. Instead, they are only one part of the equation. As Routman writes, “Some students respond with lots of written details and it looks like they are getting the meaning. However, when I probe in depth, I sometimes find students have not understood after all – in fiction especially, things like character motivation, story resolution, or author’s purpose.” (Routman, 2005, p. 126). As in the case of Serena, the opposite is also equally true: reluctant or poor writers often fail to receive recognition for

their well-developed understanding of a text simply because they lack interest in writing or show sloppy technique. Teachers need to ensure they are getting an accurate picture of each student's level of comprehension. One way to do this is to incorporate various forms of alternative assessment into their teaching practices. This thesis has endeavoured to show how sketch-to-stretch can be used as one such method of assessment.

Sketch-to-stretch, as an alternative to the traditional written reader-response, provides students with a new way to communicate their ideas and understanding without worrying about the constraints and frustrations that can accompany conventional printing activities. Sketch-to-stretch takes the tediousness of writing short and long responses, and proofreading and revising them for appropriate content and conventions, and removes it from the equation. It allows students to concentrate on the creative task of making connections to texts and forming ideas without anxiety or limitations. Perhaps most importantly, students enjoy it. Of the 17 students in my class who completed the Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey, 13 indicated that they either felt slightly happy or very happy about sketch-to-stretch. In fact, the students disclosed a more positive attitude toward sketch-to-stretch (with 76% in favour), than reading (with 74% in favour), and not surprisingly, writing (with 69% in favour). It is this positive attitude that encourages reluctant writers to demonstrate their comprehension through the use of presentation and audience, ideas and meaning making, and voice.

## Epilogue

This June, Serena completed the third grade, earning an A in Reading and a C+ in Writing on her final report card. Not surprisingly, she scored a Level 2 in Reading and a Level 2 in Writing according to her individual report on the Spring 2013 EQAO Assessment of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. According to EQAO at least, Serena is a student who is achieving below provincial standards in literacy, and needs to work on improving identified learning gaps to ensure her future success as she enters the fourth grade in the fall (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 18). EQAO provided suggestions for how her family can support her learning at home; they included: talk to your child daily about what she is reading and listen to your child read aloud or read aloud to her. What meaning do you make of this?

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Sketch to Stretch Activity Rubric (msoulakian)

#### Sketch to Stretch Activity

Listening to a poem, drawing what you imagine from the poem, and briefly writing about it.

Keywords: *(None)*

Categories: Subjects: [English](#)  
Types: [Assignment](#)

Grade Levels:

K-5

<b>SKETCH TO STRETCH</b>				
	<b>No Points 0 pts</b>	<b>Poor 1 pts</b>	<b>Fair 2 pts</b>	<b>Good 3 pts</b>
<b>Listening to poem</b>	No Points Did not listen, disruptive behavior	Poor Did not listen or disruptive	Fair Seemed uninterested or did not follow the directions	Good Interested and attentively listening
<b>Sketching</b>	No Points Did not attempt to do the assignment	Poor Barely attempted to do the assignment (disruptive)	Fair Completed assignment but did not color or show creativity and/or seemed uninterested	Good Completed assignment in color and creatively
<b>Writing</b>	No Points Did not attempt to do the assignment	Poor Barely attempted to do the assignment (disruptive)	Fair Attempted to do the assignment and seemed uninterested	Good Completed writing assignment
<b>Group Discussion</b>	No Points	Poor	Fair	Good
<b>Comprehension</b>	Did not participate and was disruptive No Points	Did not participate or was disruptive Poor	Gave very little input to group discussion Fair	Gave input to group discussion Good
	Did not participate and was disruptive	Did not participate, disruptive, or did not care to understand the meaning behind the poem	Showed little understanding of the meaning behind the poem or participated	Showed understanding of the meaning behind the poem and participated

## Appendix B: Chapter 4: Sketch to Stretch Assessment Rubric (Trisha Shannon, 2010)

Category	3	2	1
Relevance of Sketch	The student's sketch is relevant to the story. The details in the sketch coincide with words used in the story.	The student's sketch is somewhat relevant to the story. Some details may be misplaced or misused.	The student's sketch is not relevant to the story. Major details are excluded and it is not evident that the student understood the story.
Accuracy of Writing	The student accurately describes the sketch in words. Overall, the writing connects with the sketch.	The student's writing is somewhat related to the sketch. The student may have left out some details.	The student's writing is not related to the sketch or was incomplete. The writing shows no evidence of understanding.
Attractiveness	The picture is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The picture is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The picture is acceptably attractive though it may be a bit messy.
Mechanics	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the explanation of the picture.	There is 1 error in capitalization or punctuation in the explanation of the picture.	There are 2+ errors in capitalization or punctuation in the explanation of the picture.

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_/12

Letter Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

## Appendix C: Principal's In-Class Research Letter of Approval



235 Kingswood Drive  
Brampton, ON L6V 3B3  
t 905.457.9971  
f 905.457.6598  
[www.peelschools.org/1536](http://www.peelschools.org/1536)

**Principal:**  
Simone Gravesande

**Vice-Principal:**  
Paula da Silva

**Office Manager:**  
Patti Lilly


Thursday, June 6, 2013.

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that Meghan McBride has my permission to conduct her research as discussed with members of our school community, including students, as meets the requirements of her research as outlined for her Masters Thesis. As the research to be conducted deals with achievement in the academic setting, I wholly support the work in this endeavour and confirm that I approve the scope and plan for the research to be conducted as required by our school Code of Conduct and Board standards. I believe her plan to be ethically sound so far as it relates to the interviews and research she intends to conduct.

Should you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (905) 457-9971.

Sincerely,

  
Ms. S. Gravesande  
Principal

# Appendix D: Informed Letter of Parental Consent



KINGSWOOD DRIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL

*Building Bridges to the Future*

T 905.457.9971  
F 905.457.6596

Principal:  
Simone Gravesande

Vice-Principal:  
Pauta da Silva

Office Manager:  
Patti Lilly

Sketch-to-Stretch: Reading Comprehension and Alternative Assessment in the Classroom

Meghan McBride

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. As part of my Master of Arts in Literacy Education thesis, I am conducting teacher-research under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Manning. I am inviting students in my third grade class at Kingswood Drive Public School to participate in my study, Sketch-to-Stretch: Reading Comprehension and Alternative Assessment in the Classroom. Sketch-to-Stretch is a reading response strategy that invites students to respond to text with art rather than traditional pencil and paper writing tasks. This study will explore the utility of Sketch-to-Stretch as an alternative assessment for students who struggle with writing responses to texts read in class.

As part of this study, I will be using some of the activities that I normally use in my daily teaching practices as a form of data. I will be selecting some samples of a strategy I use called Sketch-to-Stretch to photocopy and use for analysis. The privacy of all students whose work is used will be respected according to the policy of the Peel Board of Education and Mount Saint Vincent University. To ensure anonymity throughout the study, all personal identifiers will be removed and students will be identified using pseudonyms. No photographs or video of your child will be used in this case study.

While there is no direct benefit to your child for participation, the outcomes from the research will influence my teaching practices in the classroom and help me better meet the needs of all my students. There is also no risk to your child, as the data used in the study is part of my everyday teaching and not collected simply for the use of this study, and privacy will be respected.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to allow me to use the Sketch-to-Stretches produced by your child, please sign and return the Informed Consent Letter below. Please be assured that if you decide not to give me permission, this will in no way affect your child in the classroom. If you give permission, but later decide to withdraw that permission, you may do so at any time with no negative consequences. If you do decide to withdraw permission, all data on your child will be immediately destroyed.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact myself or Simone Gravesande, Principal, at Kingswood Drive Public School (905-457-9971). Or e-mail faculty supervisor Dr. Andrew Manning at [andrew.manning@msvu.ca](mailto:andrew.manning@msvu.ca). If you have any questions or concerns about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research Office, at 902-457-6350 or via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca). This research activity has met The Peel Board of Education's ethical standards for external research. The ethical components of this research study have been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Board and found to be in compliance with Mount Saint Vincent University's Research Ethics Policy.

---

**By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to your child participating in this study.**

My child, \_\_\_\_\_, has my permission to participate in a teacher-research study conducted by his/her third grade teacher Meghan McBride (ending in June 2013).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*One signed copy to be kept by the researcher, one signed copy to the participant.*



## Appendix E: Research Ethics Clearance Certificate



University Research Ethics Board


### UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

#### Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance

File #: 2012-116  
Title of project: *Sketch-to-Stretch: Reading Comprehension and Alternative Assessment in the Classroom*  
Researcher(s): Meghan McBride  
Supervisor (if applicable): Andy Manning  
Co-Investigators: n/a  
Version : 1

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above named proposal and confirms that it respects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* as outlined in the *MSVU Policies and Procedures: Ethics Review of Research Involving Humans* regarding the ethics of research involving human participants.

This certificate of approval is valid one year from the date of issue. Renewals are available for up to four years in addition to the initial year and are contingent upon an annual submission to the UREB of a written request for renewal accompanied by a satisfactory annual ethics report thirty days prior to the expiry date as listed below. A final report is due on or before the expiry date. Researchers are reminded that any changes to approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the UREB prior to their implementation.

 Dr. Daniel Séguin, Chair University Research Ethics Board (UREB)	<b>June 11, 2013</b> Effective Date <i>[Expires: June 10, 2014]</i>
--	---

















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Tel 902 457 6350 • Fax 902 457 2174  
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# Appendix F: Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

## Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

















1.	How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?				
2.	How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?				
3.	How do you feel about reading for fun at home?				
4.	How do you feel about getting a book for a present?				

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Survey designed by Dennis J. Kear, Wichita State University

















Appendix F (Continued)

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5.	How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?				
6.	How do you feel about starting a new book?				
7.	How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?				
8.	How do you feel about reading instead of playing?				

## Appendix F (Continued)

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9.	How do you feel about going to a bookstore?				
10.	How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?				
11.	How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?				
12.	How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?				

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Appendix F (Continued)

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

13.

How do you feel about reading in school?



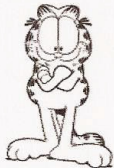
14.

How do you feel about reading your school books?



15.

How do you feel about learning from a book?



















16.

How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?



Appendix F (Continued)

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17.	How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?				
18.	How do you feel when you read out loud in class?				
19.	How do you feel about using a dictionary?				
20.	How do you feel about taking a reading test?				

Appendix F (Continued)

**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Administration Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Scoring Guide</b>	
4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

Recreational reading

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_

Raw Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic reading

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_

Raw Score: \_\_\_\_\_

















Full scale raw score ..... (Recreational + Academic): \_\_\_\_\_

Percentile ranks: ..... Recreational   
..... Academic   
..... Full scale

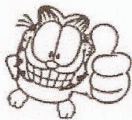



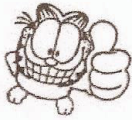



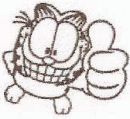











# Appendix G: Writing Attitude Survey

## Writing Attitude Survey









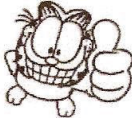



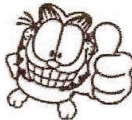







Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.	1. How would you feel writing a letter to the author of a book you read?				
	2. How would you feel if you wrote about something you have heard or seen?				
	3. How would you feel writing a letter to a store asking about something you might buy there?				
	4. How would you feel telling in writing why something happened?				





















Appendix G (Continued)

<small>GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.</small>	5. How would you feel writing to someone to change their opinion?				
	6. How would you feel keeping a diary?				
	7. How would you feel writing poetry for fun?				
	8. How would you feel writing a letter stating your opinion about a topic?				
	9. How would you feel if you were an author who writes books?				









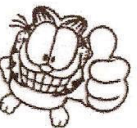











Appendix G (Continued)

<small>GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.</small>	10. How would you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper or magazine?				
	11. How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?				
	12. How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?				
	13. How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?				
	14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?				

















Appendix G (Continued)

<small>GARFIELD © PAXA. All rights reserved.</small>	15. How would you feel writing about something you did in social studies?				
	16. How would you feel if you could write more in school?				
	17. How would you feel about writing down the important things your teacher says about a new topic?				
	18. How would you feel writing a long story or report at school?				
	19. How would you feel writing answers to questions in science or social studies?				

Appendix G (Continued)

<small>GARFIELD. © PAMS. All rights reserved.</small>	20. How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?				
	21. How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better ?				
	22. How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?				
	23. How would you feel keeping a journal for class?				
	24. How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?				

Appendix G (Continued)

<small>GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.</small>	25. How would you feel writing about something from another person's point of view?				
	26. How would you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written are spelled correctly?				
	27. How would you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?				
	28. How would you feel if you didn't write as much in school?				

## Appendix G (Continued)

### Writing Attitude Survey Scoring sheet

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Administration date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Scoring guide

4 points	Very happy Garfield
3 points	Somewhat happy Garfield
2 points	Somewhat upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

#### Item scores:

1. _____	15. _____
2. _____	16. _____
3. _____	17. _____
4. _____	18. _____
5. _____	19. _____
6. _____	20. _____
7. _____	21. _____
8. _____	22. _____
9. _____	23. _____
10. _____	24. _____
11. _____	25. _____
12. _____	26. _____
13. _____	27. _____
14. _____	28. _____

Full scale raw score: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentile rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix H: "Earth Day" Poem by Jane Yolen

Earth Day

I am the Earth  
Each blade of grass,  
Each honey tree,  
Each bit of mud,  
And stick and stone  
Is blood and muscle,  
Skin and bone.

And just as I  
Need every bit  
Of me to make  
My body fit,  
So Earth needs  
Grass and stone and tree  
And things that grow here  
Naturally.

That's why we  
Celebrate this day.  
That's why across  
The world we say:  
As long as life,  
As dear, as free,  
I am the Earth  
And the Earth is me.



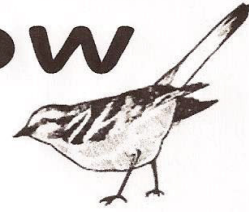
By Jane Yolen

Appendix I: "Tomorrow" by Peter Blue Cloud

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Tomorrow

Peter Blue Cloud



We have wept the blood  
of countless ages  
as each of us raised high  
the lance of hate...

Now let us dry our tears  
and learn the dance  
and chant of the life cycle.

Tomorrow dances behind the sun  
in sacred promise  
of things to come for children  
not yet born.



For ours is the potential of truly  
lasting beauty  
born of hope and shaped by deed.

Now let us lay the lance of hate  
upon this soil.



## Appendix J: Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Sketch-to-Stretch Attitude Survey

Answer the questions in the space below.

1. Do you like writing? Why or why not?
2. Do you enjoy writing in school? Why or why not?
3. Do you like Sketch-to-Stretch activities? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think people may like Sketch-to-Stretch?

**Appendix J (Continued)**

**5. Does Sketch-to-Stretch help you with learning new things?**

**6. Circle the face that best describes your feelings about Sketch-to-Stretch?**

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